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GAMBLE GOLD



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"GAMBLE, KING OF WALES."



GAMBLE GOLD

By

HIS HONOUR JUDGE

EDWARD ABBOTT PARRY

*Author of "The Scarlet Herring," "Katawampus:
Its Treatment and Cure," "Butterscotia," etc.*

With Illustrations

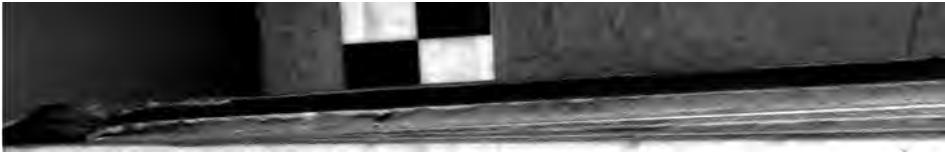
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I

After the Moon





CHAPTER I

AFTER THE MOON



NCE upon a time, a long, long time ago, there lived a little boy named Gamble Gold. When I say a long, long time ago, I really mean a long, long time ahead, for this story has not really happened yet, but it will happen. For, of course, if I was not sure that it was going to be a true story some day, I should not tell it. But you will find before you reach the end of it, that this is just as true as any story I ever wrote—and now and then it is more so.

Gamble Gold was a little boy of seven, and he lived with his grandmother in far Glen Guile, which is in the Highlands of Scotland. Gamble had blue eyes and curly yellow hair, and there was nearly always a smile on his face; and Gamble Gold smiled because he was happy,

Gamble Gold

and he was happy because he had learned that it was better to smile than to frown, better to laugh than to cry, better to love than to be cross. It was easy for Gamble Gold to have a silvery laugh and a sweet smile—for the fairies had given them to him when he was born, and his fond grandmother had taken care that he should practise them every day, as if they were five-fingered exercises. If you have a sweet smile, be sure to practise it carefully every day, but whenever you see a scowl on your face, rub it off with breadcrumbs and a hat brush.

His grandmother was a dear old lady with a white cap and grey ringlets and a merry face like a rosy wrinkled apple. She had rather a bad memory, but this did not matter much, for to balance it she was able to foresee all sorts of things that were going to happen, and some things which never happened at all.

Now she lived on the hill-side, by the edge of a little waterfall, the stream from which ran into a lake at the foot of the mountains from whence it sprang. Her hut was a sort of tent or wigwam made of arched branches of trees covered with deer-skins and sacking. All round the hut were larch-trees and Scotch firs which gave a pleasant shade in the hot summer days—and in the days I am writing of it was always summer weather. Winter had been abolished and sent to the North Pole, where any one who wanted it went after it; but in Glen Guile it was always summer, and if you wanted a day's snowballing, you went up to the high mountains at the back of the woods, and had as much as you liked of it.

Although the hut was many miles from anywhere, it



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was not difficult to find, for on each tree in all the woods around it a little white plank was nailed with a hand painted on to point out the way, with the words: "To Granny's house." This was really necessary, for, as I told you, Granny had a poor memory, and if she went for a long walk without Gamble she was apt to forget where she lived. Then she would follow the pointing hands until she found herself at home.

But though Granny was forgetful about such little things as where she had left her wigwam, she had a wonderful memory for old-world stories of knights and kings, and giants and fairies, and she often told Gamble about a glorious school where all the boys had wild adventures, and she knew the strangest fables and rhymes you ever heard. Gamble Gold had fine times listening to these stories in the twilight before bedtime, I can tell you.

Now though Granny and little Gamble lived all alone and had no visitors, Granny was very particular—in case any stranger should appear—to write up all kinds of rules and regulations on the rocks and trees. And when you got near to her dwelling, you found little papers pinned up, saying "Please do not drink the waterfall," "Keep on the grass"—and you could not help doing that for it was all grass; but if you came from a town, you might not have known you were allowed to walk on it, and the notice made you feel happy about it. Then on the hut itself there were quite a lot of notices: "Gnats and midges are requested not to enter the house," "Mosquitoes will be prosecuted," "To slugs! Beware of the duck." There was not really a duck, but it frightened the slugs

Gamble Gold

off, and kept them from wandering oozily about in front of the tent. Granny was a very particular old lady, and one of the notices was: "Mind you wipe your feet on the mat." Gamble always remembered this, but Budge could not be taught to do it. Budge was Gamble's sheep-dog, and helped him to look after the sheep on the mountains. He was a grey-purple dog, with a black snout and raw sienna eyes, and had a shaggy head and a bob-tail. He might have been an old English sheep-dog, but he was better than that. He was a real old-world Welsh sheep-dog. He always ran into the hut without wiping his feet, walked three times round himself, and threw himself down fast asleep. Granny said next time he did it he would be punished. She could foresee he would do it next time, but when next time came, her memory failed her, and she told Budge once more that next time he did it he should be punished. That was one of the things that made Gamble smile.

He talked seriously to Budge on the mountain-side about wiping his feet on the mat, and Budge promised to remember about it, but somehow he nearly always forgot. Do not blame the poor dog too harshly; remember that the best of us forget now and then.

It was a summer's evening, and Gamble's work was done, and he beside his cottage door—no, he wasn't, he was sitting on a rock on the top of the mountain with Budge by his side. I tell you, it is a very difficult job to remember exactly what is going to happen a hundred years ago, or rather ahead, and if I make a mistake now and then, do not blame me too harshly. My memory is getting more like Granny's every day.



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But I was right about the summer evening, and Gamble Gold was bringing his sheep and lambs down from the mountains, for he was a good shepherd, and used to tuck up each little lamb in his cot every night, and kiss his damp little snout, and tell him to dream pretty dreams. It is not every shepherd that does that for his lambs. But Gamble Gold always sat on the wall and told them stories, and sang them to sleep, and I think their favourite song was "The Lambkin's Dream," with the chorus :

Sleep, little lambkins! Sleep! Sleep!
And you shall grow up to be good little sheep.

But to-night he sang them another song. For to-night the moon was going to rise over the mountains, and Gamble Gold knew it, and he knew more than that, for he knew that the moon was made of green cheese—Granny had told him so—and Gamble meant to get that green cheese and carry it home to Granny. When he was a little wee chap he used to cry for the moon, but now that he was quite grown up and seven years old, he never cried for anything he could get for himself, and though he had made several attempts to catch the moon and had not yet succeeded, he knew that he would succeed one day. And he had made up a song about what he meant to do, and he sang this to his sheep, and the stupid old sheep, who did not believe that he would ever reach the moon, had made up a chorus of their own to his song, which they sang to him, and this always made him laugh heartily, for he knew far more about the moon than the silly old sheep did. And the song and the chorus went like this, and Gamble sat in the centre of his sheep and

lambs to sing it, while Budge beat time for the chorus with his bushy tail :

THE GOOD GREEN CHEESE

I have seen it in the heavens,
 Rolling round and rolling bright,
And I'm setting out to catch it,
 And to bring it home to-night.
We'll have celery for supper
 And spring onions if you please,
When I bring you from the mountain-tops
 The Good Green Cheese.

Then came the chorus of sheep, the little lambs joining in with a mild bleating treble :

But the green cheese is clever,
 The green cheese is sly,
You will capture it, if ever,
 In the sweet by-and-by.
You've sighed for it, and sobbed for it,
 'Tis hanging there to tease :
The heavens won't be robbed of it,
 The Good Green Cheese.

Gamble sang again :

When it's rising through the forest,
 Though it winks at me and smiles,
Because it has the start of me,
 Two hundred thousand miles,
Yet some day I shall find it
 Fast entangled in the trees,
And then we'll all have supper off
 The Good Green Cheese.

Then the sheep and the lambs, who knew it was their



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bed-time, rose up and came bleating home to bed, singing the chorus again :

But the green cheese is clever,
The green cheese is sly,
You will capture it, if ever,
In the sweet by-and-by.
You've cried for it, and sobbed for it,
'Tis hanging there to tease,
The heavens won't be robbed of it,
The Good Green Cheese.

But Gamble did not hear them, and scarcely noticed that they had left him alone on the hill-side with Budge, and Budge was gazing into his master's face with his tongue out, looking very excited.

"What's the lad looking after?" said Granny to herself as she walked into the paddock where the little lambs slept.

She pasted a notice on to a flat stone: "Lambkins who talk after they are in bed will get their wool pulled."

Gamble Gold stood on the top of a rock on the mountain side, his crook in one hand, with the other he shaded his eyes and gazed steadily at the top of Ben Negus. For once he had quite forgotten his dear little lambs. Ben Negus is not only the mistiest, moistiest mountain in Scotland, but there are great precipices of biscuit on either side of it—these are very dangerous to climb unless you spread them over first with treacle or marmalade, and then crawl up them like a fly. Gamble Gold's little tartan kilt and his loose skin cloak fluttered in the evening breeze, but his bare limbs were taut against the sky as he gazed in rapt wonderment at the great mountain.

What he saw was a little pale silver streak stealing up behind the purple edge of Ben Negus. Slowly it came out, until the whole full, round, beautiful moon balanced itself exactly on the top edge of the mighty mountain.

"This time I can reach you," thought Gamble Gold. "Wait, wait," he cried to the smiling moon, "I am coming!"

Throwing down his crook, he tore through the larch woods on the Negusinian slopes, followed by the faithful Budge, barking for joy at the prospect of a wild run on the hill-side.

"After it again!" said his Granny. "After it again! When will he learn better?"

She shook her head sadly, and went into the house for her pen and ink and blotting pad, and wrote out a new notice.

This she pasted over one that was on a rock near the waterfall. The old one said: "Please do not cry for the moon." The new one ran: "Visitors are politely informed that the moon does not belong to the landowner, and that she would not give it away if it did."

"Perhaps that will settle Master Gamble," said Granny, as she returned to the hut, and looked anxiously towards Ben Negus. "You'd better clear off the edge of that mountain," she shouted to the moon, and the moon slowly closed one eye, and then opened it quickly. "The moon knows what it is about, even if it is made of green cheese," said Granny, chuckling to herself, as she went into the hut to get supper ready, "but Gamble is mighty sharp, and if he climbed to the top of Ben Negus before the moon got away, think what it would cost me in night-lights!"



AFTER THE MOON.

And that was exactly what Master Gamble meant to do. He was a splendid climber, and by this time he had got to the foot of the biscuit precipice, and was tumbling along across a rubble of falling macaroons and cracknels, until he reached the steep gingerbread cliffs beneath the vast strawberry ice glacier on the north side of the mountain. Then he commenced to run lightly across a wide morass of sponge cake with pools of stagnant ginger-beer upon it. Budge left him here, for the poor dog was tired out. He lay down panting on the top of the Dog Biscuit Rock, and when he felt better, he bit pieces off and bolted them. But Gamble Gold was scaling the gingerbread cliffs like a hero.

The moon was out of sight now, and the valley in shade, but Gamble lost no time, for he knew that his prize was there on the edge of the mountain. He had seen it. Out of the woods below came the grey cuckoos, spreading their wings and tails and chasing each other across the lake.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" they cried mockingly.

"Who's a cuckoo?" shouted Gamble angrily, as he hauled himself up a steep wafer biscuit on to the slopes of the strawberry glacier. "Who's a cuckoo, I'd like to know?" he repeated, as he skated up the glacier on the lids of two biscuit tins that had fallen by the wayside when they were making the mountain.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" cried the mocking, teasing birds.

But Gamble did not hear them, for he was across the glacier now, bounding up the last slopes to grasp in his hands the prize he had longed for. The top cairn of Edinburgh Rock was in sight, and the edge of the



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moon was sharp against the mountain, and more and more of it appeared as he rushed breathlessly up the highest crags that led to the summit.

"Mine! My very own at last!" he cried, spreading out his arms to embrace the beautiful silver ball that now seemed to be within his grasp.

He sprang on to the highest rock, and, as if by magic, there was the moon hundreds of miles away, rolling along on top of some lowland hills in the far south.

One glance showed him that he was defeated, and then, tired and weary and broken-hearted, he fell at the foot of the cairn, his little face upon his bent arms, and sobbed himself to sleep.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" came up faintly from the lake. But it did not annoy Gamble Gold, for he was dreaming that he had the moon in his arms, and that it was not made of green cheese after all, but that it was soft as wool, and cold as ice, and filled your head with beautiful thoughts.

When Budge had finished the Dog Biscuit Rock, he went back to the hut, and fell asleep in his usual corner, without a word to his mistress.

"Where did you learn manners?" asked Granny. And she wrote out a notice, and pinned it over his head, so that he should read it in the morning.

The notice was: "All cats, dogs, and other pets must kiss Granny and say good-night before going to bed."

"I think that puts it in a kindly way," she said, "and isn't too personal; but it's only fair to Tabbyskins to say that she never does forget to say good-night, though sometimes she doesn't go to bed afterwards."

Granny sat up till midnight waiting for Gamble Gold to return. She was not a bit anxious about him, for she had foreseen that he would be fast asleep on the top of Ben Negus, and it was a beautiful night.

However, as he did not return at midnight, she got out her broom-stick, and, putting two night-lights on the back of a couple of bats, she sent them on ahead to light the way, and went whistling up the clouds to the top of Ben Negus, at a little faster speed than is really allowed by the County Council. She picked up Gamble, placed him sleeping in her lap, and wafted him safely down to their little hut. It was one in the morning when Gamble was tucked up in bed, and dear old Granny had to sew three buttons on his cloak, and had still two notices to write and pin on the outer curtains of the hut before she went to bed herself. The notices were, first: "Special and important. No cuckoo is to sing before six in the morning." Secondly: "Breakfast is at nine."



II

The New Idea





CHAPTER II

THE NEW IDEA



THE next morning, Granny was up and about very early, getting the breakfast ready, whilst Gamble Gold was still fast asleep. Gamble generally woke up in good time, and helped Granny, but this morning he was tired after his adventure in search of the moon.

As for Budge, he never woke up until the eating began.

Granny made a fire of sticks outside the tent, gave Neddy, the donkey, his hay, milked the cow, turned the sheep on to the mountains, fed the chickens, and then put the kettle on to

boil. The kettle soon began to sing a little.

"Not that song," said Granny sharply.

"You never let me try a new one," murmured the kettle.

"I did once," answered Granny, "and a nice mess you made of it. Even the cuckoos laughed."

The kettle hung his spout in a downcast way, and looked rather ashamed.

"It was out of an Italian opera, you know," he said, by way of excuse.

"It was out of tune," said Granny; "you stick to your own song, and the sooner you sing it the sooner we shall get breakfast."

"All right," said the kettle, "just a few bars to start me, please."

Few people really understand kettles. I have known people knock coals about quite cruelly with an iron poker, because a kettle refused to sing. Now all singers are a little shy. Perhaps a kettle hasn't brought his music; then, of course, he can't sing. Or else he has a cold in his lid; then you can't expect him to be in tune. But most kettles will sing for you if you ask them in a kindly tone, and put a little warmth in your manner of speech to them. Even if a kettle is sulky, you should not heap coals of fire on his lid, neither should you call a kettle black—at least, not before his spout. His occupation makes it difficult for him to keep clean.

Granny knew how to deal with her own kettle. Firmness and kindness will do a lot even with kettles. She took a reed pipe from a shelf in her hut, and sitting on a rock in front of the tent, played a few bars of quite simple music, to help the kettle remember his song.

"That's the old song," said the kettle.

"Sing it then," said Granny.

And he did.



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SONG OF THE KETTLE

I might have been a cannon
Or anything of metal,
It sounds absurd
But I preferred
To be a copper kettle.

Singing Puff! Puff! Puff!
It's a humble little job
To boil the water ~~for~~ the tea,
And sing upon the hob.

I might have lived at Troutbeck
And been a hunter's horn,
And chased the fox
O'er crags and rocks
And through the growing corn.

Calling Toot! Toot! Toot!
View halloo, and Tally ho!
Come all ye fellows, follow me,
A-hunting we will go.

But I preferred the simple life,
And here I chose to settle,
And I rejoice
With heart and voice
To be a copper kettle.

Shouting Puff! Puff! Puff!
Oh, I'm boiling! Here's the steam!
So run and fetch the teapot
And the sugar and the cream.

Gamble Gold had slowly awakened during the kettle's song, and sat up in his little cot when the song ended and said to Granny, "Why, I must be very late this morning!"

"I don't know that you must, but you are," said Granny laughingly, as she took up a towel and a bit of soap and

hitched the kettle off the fire. "Out of bed, Gamble, and let us get the tubbing done with."

Gamble Gold's bathroom was at the foot of the waterfall. It was hollowed out in the smooth grey rock and was about five feet long, two feet deep, and a yard across, and in shape it was oval. There was a little round pot-hole for the soap. The waterfall supplied beautiful clear green transparent water with a little fizz in it, which rushed in at one end of the bath, went round and round in a little whirlpool inside the bath, and then shot out into the stream. This took all the soap-suds away, so that you never got any in your mouth—I have known it take the soap and the nail-brush too, if you were not careful with them. The bath was shaded from the sun by a beautiful rowan and a silver birch-tree. Granny had chosen the spot most carefully when Gamble was a very little boy, because, as she said, "If there is any difficulty about getting him into his bath, the birch-tree would be most helpful." But there never was any trouble. Gamble Gold loved his bath, and the only bother was to get him out when the time came for towel scrubbing, which never can be made as amusing as splashing in a bath.

There were several of Granny's notices on the rocks hard by. One was: "Otters are requested to keep to the stream." Another: "Salmon found sleeping in the bath will be potted." No doubt it was necessary to have these up, but there did not seem to be much purpose in pasting up, "Please turn on the cold tap first." I think it was scarcely needed, because there were no taps, and the hot water was brought in the kettle. However, Granny was very particular, and liked everything in order.



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The way to get into the bath was to jump in just as Granny poured in the hot water. Then it swirled all round you, warm at first, and gradually colder, until by the time the warm had gone you were quite used to the cold. That was something like a bath, I can tell you. And what a lovely coloured bath-mat the daisies and tom-thumbs made when you got out, pink and glowing like a young boiled lobster.

Whilst Gamble Gold was dressing, Granny got the breakfast cooked, and made the tea. When all was ready, she wrote out a menu like you have at an hotel. She did not see why, because you lived in the gay green woods you should do things in a slovenly fashion. The menu was like this :

MENU.

Porridge and Cream.

N.B. Granny pours out the cream.

Grilled Trout.

N.B. Mind the bones.

Bacon.

Eggs.

Eggs and Bacon.

Bacon and Eggs.

N.B. Only one helping of these.

Jam or Marmalade.

N.B. Not both.

N.B. No butter with the last two.

N.B. Two slices of toast—after that, bread.

Tea or Coffee.

N.B. There is no coffee.

That was a menu good enough to satisfy a king. Gamble Gold could not read it, but he used to ask Granny to read it out to him, because he saw she liked to. He knew all the rules and he always enjoyed his breakfast, as well he might, sitting under the shade of a big sycamore-tree out in the beautiful country, with a kind Granny to look after him and a whole flock of sheep and lambs of his very own to play with and take care of.

Budge woke up at the marmalade stage, and had a dish of crusts and cream all to himself; then he put his nose on his forepaws and closed his eyes and dreamt of rabbits, waking himself up by barking just as he was catching one.

"Now look here, Gamble," said Granny, as she poured out her second cup of tea, "no more chasing the moon about."

"I thought I'd got it last night, Granny," said Gamble eagerly.

"You never will get it," said his grandmother sternly.

"Oh, Granny," sighed the little boy, "and I do so want it."

"Why?" asked Granny. "What are you going to do with it?"

"Keep it for my very own."

"That's a selfish idea."

"Oh, I'd let you play with it, Granny."

"I believe you would, Gamble, but you can't have it, anyhow, so just leave it alone, will you?"

"All right, Granny," he said cheerfully, "if you don't want me to have the moon, I won't, but I know I could get it if you would let me."



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Granny smiled.

"I was getting rather tired of the moon, too," said Gamble thoughtfully. "I told Budge so yesterday, didn't I, Budge?"

Budge woke up and nodded, snapped twice at a bluebottle, and missed him badly, and then went off to sleep again.

"What's the latest idea, Gamble?" asked Granny—for Gamble generally had some wonderful new idea every day, and when he had talked it over with Budge and the lambkins, he liked to unfold it to Granny, and see what she said about it.

"I think I should like to go and be a King," said Gamble very seriously.

"I always foresaw you would, darling," said Granny, "but do put it off for a year or two."

"I'm getting rather old, you know, Granny, and there must be a lot to be done first."

"There is," replied Granny, "there always was and always will be. For instance, there's the washing-up to do just now."

Granny and Gamble did the washing-up, and whilst it was going on, Gamble went on talking over his new idea.

"You see," he said, "if I were a King, I shouldn't make all the silly blunders those Kings make in the stories you tell, Granny."

"Of course not, darling. Scrub the kettle, will you?"

Gamble took some Monkey soap and a chamois leather and the kettle began to shine like a copper moon.

"I shouldn't cut off my wives' heads like——"

Gamble Gold

"Henry VIII.," suggested Granny.

"And I shouldn't put twenty-four blackbirds in a pie, I should have them singing outside."

"Of course you would," said Granny.

"It would be grand to be a King and go about making every one happy all over the world."

"But you see, Gamble, there are ever so many kings up and down the world already, so where are you going to find a kingdom? You haven't thought of that."

"Oh yes, I have, Granny. I'm going to give all the Kings a holiday, and then I'm going to be King over all the world, and, Granny dear, you shall be Queen."

Granny shook her head.

"You will have to find a Princess, Gamble."

"Shall I? Why?"

"It's always been the rule, dear."

"Well, you shall be Queen then until I do find a Princess. Will the kettle 'do?' he asked, holding it up to shine in the sun.

"If you polish up the old world as well as you've done the kettle, it will make people stare," said Granny.

"Let's start to-day," said Gamble eagerly. "I'm just longing to begin."

"Why not stay here and be a King?" said Granny.

"Oh, this isn't half big enough. Besides, I want lots of palaces and servants, and soldiers and ships."

"You won't be a bit happier, you know," said Granny doubtfully.

"But every one else will be."

"It's a weary job trying to make some folk happy, because they're only happy when they're grumbling."



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"Well, there will be nothing to grumble about when I am King."

"But you couldn't be King of all the world straight away," said Granny. "You would have to start with some place that hadn't got a King."

"Why so?" said Gamble.

"It's the rule," said Granny.

When Granny said a thing was the rule, it settled it, and Gamble felt there was no answer to that.

"Anyhow," he said, after a pause, "if I did well, and made every one happy in my own little kingdom, then I suppose all the other peoples would want me to be their King."

"They might," said Granny doubtfully, "and then again they might not. You never know what folk want nowadays. But in any case, I expect you will have to go to the old school, just like any other boy, and learn to be a King."

"That is the beautiful school you have told me about so often," said Gamble, his eyes all aglow.

"I half wish I hadn't, dearie."

"Why not, Granny?"

"We've been so happy here, Gamble, you and I, and I can't make out why you want to go out in the wide, wide world, and grow up like any other little boy."

"Do all other little boys want to grow up, and go into the wide, wide world?" asked Gamble.

"They will do it," said Granny, raising her voice mournfully. "It makes their mothers cry, and what it costs their fathers no one ever knows. But this is certain, that growing up and going out into the wide, wide world is what

small boys have been after all my time, and mark my words, you will never stop them."

"Why do you want to stop them, Granny?" asked Gamble.

"I don't know, dearie. We seem very happy here, and if you go, I must go back too."

"Don't you want to go back to the wide, wide world, Granny?" asked Gamble wonderingly.

Granny shook her head. "No one does, dearie, who has tried it. It's like the moon you were after last night. It is all going to be round and bright and beautiful when you are young, but you never really get your arms right round it, and it's never really all your very own. Just as you seem to reach it, it is always slipping away."

Gamble chuckled. "I shouldn't let it," he said boldly. "I could get the moon if I were a bit sharper, but I'd rather go out into the wide, wide world."

"I wonder why," said Granny rather sadly.

"I expect I was made that way," said Gamble thoughtfully.

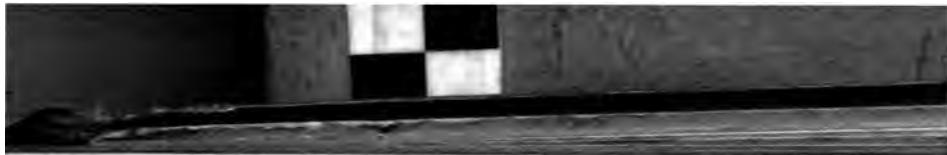
"Very likely," said Granny, "very likely. And that accounts for your wanting to go."

"Then you will let me go, Granny?"

Granny looked so sad that Gamble went up to her and whispered as he caught hold of her hands: "Of course, I'll stay here if you wish it."

"It isn't what we wish, Gamble," answered Granny, kissing him gently. "It's what has got to be. You run and look after the sheep, my boy, and I'll put my thinking-cap on and think it over."

Gamble picked up his crook, and, whistling to Budge,



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went up the hillside to tell the sheep and the lambkins all about his new idea.

Two old mother sheep listened patiently while Gamble told them how he was going out into the wide, wide world to be a King, but when he had finished all they said was "Bah!" and turned away to nibble the grass.

The lambkins were full of the idea, and frisked round, saying: "We will go, too."

"What do you expect to find there?" asked the mother sheep.

"Grass! young grass! all green and sweet and tender," shouted the lambkins.

"You'll never get better grass than this," said the mother sheep.

The lambkins winked at each other and laughed, as though they knew better than that.

"What is there in the wide, wide world, then?" asked a very young lambkin.

"Butchers and mint sauce," said the mother sheep.

A gloom fell over the lambkins' play, until one suddenly butted one of his friends and ran away, and the whole flock raced across the mountain-side, chasing him, and skipping and dancing round each other till they were out of breath.

"I'm off to the wide, wide world, too," said a squirrel sitting in a fir-tree above Gamble's head.

"What are you going to do there?" asked Gamble.

"Look for nuts," said the squirrel.

"But the wood is full of nuts," said Gamble.

"But you have to climb up trees here to get them," said

the squirrel. "I'm going to find a place where they grow in heaps on the floor."

"I don't believe there is such a place," said Gamble.

"There must be," said the squirrel, "I'm always dreaming of it, but I wake up just as I'm filling my pocket with nuts. Good morning."

The squirrel sprang away from branch to branch, and went out into the wide, wide world. It turned out to be a cage with straw in it, and a wheel to run round in, and stale nuts from a shop. Not half as merry as the good green wood.

"Hurry up, hurry up!" cried the silver stream, rushing by Gamble down the hillside. "Hurry up!"

"Where are you off to?" said Gamble.

"Into the wide, wide world," called out the stream, "over the rocks, through the lake, and down the great river to the sea."

"Take me with you," cried Gamble.

"Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up!" shouted the stream.

But though Gamble asked it to wait and see what Granny had to say, it would not wait a moment, but rushed on, shouting :

"Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up!"

Meanwhile, Granny had got out her best thinking-cap. It was made of muslin and Honiton lace, with mauve satin bows, for mauve is the most thoughtful colour there is. The first thing Granny did was to blame her kind self for having told Gamble all the stories he loved so much of kings and queens, and wars and adventures, and old rhymes of knights and ladies, and giants and dwarfs,



GAMBLE AND THE SQUIRREL.

Gamble Gold

and those jolly tales about the wonderful school. The thinking-cap told her that she must not blame herself, for all little boys love these stories, and they are the best stories there are. Then dear old Granny began thinking what a wonderful little boy her dear little Gamble Gold was, and how good he was in his bath, and how kind to her, and how well he polished the kettle, and how thoughtful he was, looking after the sheep and the lambs, and, in a word, she began to think he really was born to be a King, and what a lovely thing it would be for the world if he were to be a King! This made the thinking-cap crackle its muslin with laughter, and the mauve bows turned crimson with anger. Mauve has no sense of fun, but muslin loves a joke. The thinking-cap kept interfering with Granny's thoughts so rudely, that she was sure something was the matter with it. She went to the looking-glass pool above the waterfall, and knelt down and saw a terrible thing. She had not put the cap on straight. It is bad enough to put any cap on crooked, but with a thinking-cap it is fatal, and may turn all your thoughts sour for several hours.

To put it straight was the work of a moment, and then all was as clear as the beautiful stream itself. She remembered that when Gamble Gold was born there were five golden stars in the east in the form of a crown, and that she had at once foreseen that he was to be a King. But whether he was to be a King now, or when he grew up, was not foretold. On that point she could not make up her mind. But the thinking-cap was on straight now, and gave her the right thought at once : "Why not ask Gamble Gold's godfather?"



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"We will go to him to-day," she cried, "and take his advice. What he says shall be done."

She called Gamble from the hillside, and told him of her plan, at which he was greatly delighted, for, next to Granny, he loved his godfather best in the world.

"And where is Godfather?" he asked.

"He is staying with his old friend Ossian in his cave above Glencoe," replied Granny.

Gamble Gold jumped for joy. He loved going to Ossian's cave, for they always had shortbread and pine-apple ices after lunch when they visited him.

"You must promise me," said Granny, "that whatever Godfather says is to be done, you will do like a good boy, even if he says you are to come back and live here for a hundred years more."

"That I promise," said Gamble Gold solemnly.

Then Granny packed a few things in a bag, whilst Gamble went and put the side saddle on Neddy, for it was too far for Granny to walk all the way over the hills. Granny told Budge what to do with the sheep while they were away, and then pinned up the outer curtains of the hut with a safety-pin, to which was attached a notice:

"Please forward all letters to—

GRANNY,
Care of Krab the Cave Man,
Ossian's Cave,
Glencoe."

For Gamble Gold's godfather was no other than our old friend, Krab the Cave Man.





III

Ossian's Cave





CHAPTER III

OSSIAN'S CAVE



SSIAN had the goblins in. Every few years his cave wanted painting outside, and papering inside, and, as he was a poet, and could do nothing useful, he had to have the goblins in to paint and paper his cave. He generally gave the contract to Krab the Cave Man, because he came with his own goblins and kept them in order. Besides, Krab knew more about cave decorations than Maple's or Waring's or any one else in the trade, having a beautiful cave of his own, which was done up twice every year.

Ossian's cave is, as you know, high up on the side of a black mountain, and looks down on the Pass of Glencoe. It is impossible to reach nowadays, unless you can climb like a mountain goat. But in Ossian's day there was a long rope ladder hanging from a crag to the foot of the mountain, and this Ossian could draw up and let down again whenever he liked, so

that he need never be disturbed by people dropping in and worrying him just as he was thinking of a rhyme.

The goblins were hard at work. The ones with wings were working on the scaffold-outside, so that if they fell off it did not matter. The little crawly fellows were pasting postage stamps on the walls inside. This was a new form of wallpaper Krab had just invented. Krab himself sat on the scaffolding, smoking his pipe, and telling the goblins how to do their work. He had not altered in the least since Pater first met him seated on the top of a wave in the Irish Channel. The same old blue and yellow suit, the same pointed dunce's cap crowned with a feather and beneath it the same sharp merry face, the same shaggy eyebrows and pointed beard, and the same kind heart. Ossian was a much younger man than Krab. He had long black hair and dressed himself in a dark purple suit with a long black cloak, rather like Hamlet in the play, only he wore a Tam-o'-Shanter, and had yellow boots, and a red tie, which rather spoilt the effect.

All Ossian's furniture had been taken down the rope ladder and spread out in a grass field. Ossian very much objected, but Krab said it must be done, if you were doing the thing properly. And as Ossian wanted it done properly, there was no help for it. So Krab sat outside on the scaffolding, directing the painters, and Ossian curled up dreamily in a corner of the cave, twanging his harp, and trying to make up a poem about Fingal.

"Look here, Bard," called out Krab from the scaffold, "would you like to have a conservatory built out here?"

"Bard" was Krab's name for Ossian.



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"It would blow away in the winter," said Ossian.

"I could put another one up next spring, and another the spring after, and another and another——"

"How much would it be?" interrupted Ossian.

"Sixpence the first year, fivepence the next, and so on until we got to nothing, and then we should work back to sixpence," replied Krab.

"Can't afford it; it takes me years to earn sixpence," sighed Ossian.

"No conservatory," shouted Krab to the foreman.

"All right, sir," said the foreman, touching his hat.

"I am afraid we shan't get any more orders out of him," said Krab quietly to the foreman.

"Do you think he'd like a new kitchen boiler or a few drains?" said the foreman.

"Not he," said Krab, shaking his head, "he's a poet; he wouldn't mind if his cave never was decorated. When he's writing poetry he doesn't know whether he's standing on his head or his heels."

"Poor gentleman!" said the foreman, "think of that now." And he ran up a ladder outside, whistling.

The outside was being painted blue, to imitate both sky and lake. Above the cave little artist goblins were painting swallows and gulls, and larks and herons that looked quite real. Below the cave other artist goblins painted trouts and salmons, and sharks and whales and minnows. They did about half the mountain-side this way, and the cave was in the middle.

"It will look splendid from the road," said Krab.

"But I live in the cave," grumbled Ossian. "I shall never see it."

"You will when you go out," said Krab.

"But I always walk away from the cave when I go out," replied Ossian.

"Then you will see it on your return home," said Krab kindly.

"I never come home till dark," said Ossian.

"Look here, Bard," said Krab firmly, "you are becoming a bit of a grumbler. Don't you let the habit grow on you. It's a bad one. If you want to see it you can, and if you don't you needn't."

"But I have to pay for it," persisted Ossian.

"Ninepence," said Krab, "ninepence, you grumbler, and it hardly pays for the paint."

"Is it real cobalt blue?" asked Ossian.

"Certainly," said Krab, rather offended. "Winsor & Newton's best."

"Will it come off?"

"Not unless it rains," said Krab.

"It rains all the winter here," groaned Ossian.

"Does it?" said Krab. "Then we must put a big glass frame over the picture. Hi, there!"

He whistled to his foreman, explained to him how to put glass over all the picture, and then went back to the cave to tell Ossian what he had done.

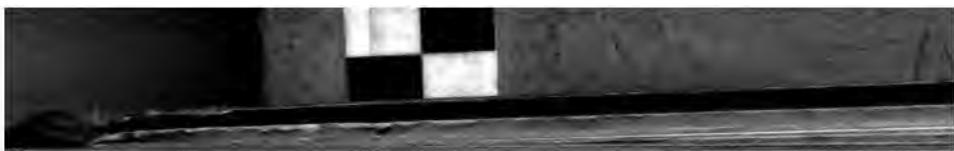
"How much will that be?" inquired Ossian.

"Fourpence!" said Krab.

"A month's work," sighed Ossian.

"You should work harder," said Krab. "You haven't done a stitch of work to-day yet."

"How can I work with your goblins all over the place? Why, yesterday they put ladders and scaffolds all round."



NASSI

me and the harp, and wasted three hours papering the soles of my boots in mistake for the walls."

"It's so dark in here, they can't see," said Krab, by way of apology.

"Turn on the electric light, then," said Ossian.

"Of course, I never thought of that—how stupid of me!" said Krab, turning it on.

The cave was at once a blaze of light, and now it was found that the goblins had stuck more than half the postage stamps upside down. Krab was furious, and taking the goblins up by handfuls, would have thrown them out into the pass, but Ossian stopped him.

The foreman came rushing in to see what the trouble was.

"It was my fault," said the foreman, whimpering. "They asked me, and I said it didn't matter which way they put them on—the poor gentlemen didn't know whether he stood on his head or his heels."

"Who told you that?" said Ossian angrily. "I do know." He jumped up and stood on his head. "Now I'm on my head," he cried triumphantly. Then he turned round and stood on his feet. "Now I'm on my heels," he shouted. "So there!"

"But you're not on your heels," chuckled the foreman. "You're on your toes."

Krab, who was always ready to act as umpire, looked down and said :

"Right! one for the goblin!"

This made Ossian very angry indeed. He went for the goblin, chasing him round the cave, but he tripped over a ladder, and the foreman fluttered out of the open door, still chuckling.



KRAB GATHERING THE GOBLINS.

Gamble Gold

Krab picked Ossian up and comforted him. "You were all right about the head, but I couldn't honestly say you were standing on your heels. I'll have the papering done again. Let us put the goblins away, and have a bit of quiet, and you shall read me your poetry."

Krab opened a big sack, and gathered all the goblins up that were inside the cave, and threw them in. Then he got a butterfly net and caught the little winged fellows who were decorating the side of the mountain, and they were all put in the sack. The foreman took a bit of catching, as he was afraid Ossian might go for him. But Ossian had quite forgiven him by now, and took him out of the butterfly net quite gently, and put him safely in the sack, to show he bore him no malice.

"Now then, read me your new poem," said Krab.

"There's only one line yet," sighed Ossian.

"Read it up," said Krab cheerfully.

"There was a King named Fingal." I couldn't get a rhyme to Fingal. I tried all yesterday and the day before, and the day before that."

"There are lots," said Krab. "'Shingle,' for instance."

"It isn't spelt the same," said Ossian, shaking his head.

"That doesn't matter. You can call him 'Fingle,' or else spell it 'shingal,' or else leave it as it stands."

"It's terrible difficult."

"Not a bit," said Krab. "Hand me the harp, pick a few chorus goblins out of the sack—half a dozen will do—and let's have a song."

Ossian did as he was desired, and Krab struck up the well-known tune of "Fingal's Return." The goblins



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arranged themselves, the tenor and soprano singers on one side, the bass and alto singers on the other.

"You've got too many of them," said Ossian.

"It's a surplus choir," said Krab.

"I don't care what it is," said Ossian, "but it strikes me—"

"Then strike it back, and let's get on with the song," shouted Krab impatiently. Then, turning to the choir, he called out: "Each goblin sticks to his own crotchet, remember! No quavering in the slow movements! Breathe slowly when you come to a maxim, and make the top minim hum."

Then, in a delicate tenor voice, with tender gruff and silvery top notes, he sang the following song:

FINGAL'S RETURN

Oh, Fingal was a warrior,
And left his Northern home
To fight with Julius Cæsar, and
His myrmidons from Rome.
He sailed away from Morven
Across the Sound of Mull,
And there his cutter was becalmed,
And Fingal had to scull.

And Fingal's little daughter,
Who was paddling in the water,
Shouted, "Daddy didn't ought ter
Leave Mummy here with me."
For little Mrs. Fingal
Sat sobbing on the shingle,
Feeling very very single,
With her husband out at sea.

The boat was very heavy,
The tide was very slack,
It was nearly Fingal's tea-time,
And he thought of going back

Gamble Gold

No heard his wife and daughter
 Both weeping on the shore,
 And being tender-hearted,
 Couldn't stand it any more.
 They were tugging at his heart-strings,
 Which were never very strong,
 And snapped in several places
 At his little daughter's song:

Oh, Fingal ! how Fingular you are!
 Oh, Fingal ! come back to dear Mamma.
 Little Fingaletta
 Will promise to be better,
 But she will not go to bed without a
 Kiss from her Papa.

So Fingal, mighty hero,
 Fleeted home upon the tide,
 Leaving Julius and his generals
 The Highlands to divide.
 It was really more important
 That Fingal should come home
 And tuck up Fingaletta
 Than fight the hosts of Rome.

And Fingal's little daughter
 Danced gaily in the water,
 Till Daddy came and caught her,
 And brought her in to tea.
 And the tears of Mrs. Fingal
 Ceased to mingle with the shingle,
 Now her own beloved Fingal
 Had come back across the sea.

They sang the chorus about a dozen times.

" You've not got all the rhymes yet," said Ossian
 " There's jingle."
 " It's all jingle," said Krab. " Even a poet might see
 that."



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"Then you are wrong about Julius Cæsar. I believe it was Severus."

"I can't tell who it was, because Fingal came back. If he'd gone on and done some fighting, we should have found out. He thought it was Julius Cæsar when he started, for that was the only Roman Emperor whose name he could remember."

"Then that is all right," said Ossian.

A sharp buzzing bell began ringing in the cave.

"Telephone!" said Krab. "See who it is."

Ossian went into the cave.

"Silly fellow," said Krab, smiling. "Can't write poetry for nuts himself, and when I make up rhymes for him he snarls over them. I guess he will publish it some day, with a preface of his own. These literary fellows are terrible thieves. I'm going to publish my next book with a barbed wire binding. Who is it, Ossian, old fellow?"

"Seems to me like a dog barking the other end," said Ossian. "I can't understand a word he barks either."

"Let me come then," said Krab, and he took the instrument from Ossian's hand.

"Hulloa!" said Krab. "It's Budge! Good dog! Yes, I understand. . . . No, I can't hear now, . . . don't wag your tail so loud, you must be hitting it against the kitchen table, . . . that's better; . . . they've started, have they? . . . Didn't Granny know we had the goblins in? . . . What are you to do about the cow? . . . Didn't Granny leave any orders? . . . Of course you can't milk the cow, . . . she must walk down to the milkman's every morning to be milked. . . . If she

is lazy about it you must take her down. . . . Right." Krab rang off. "Now, Ossian, just hurry up. We are in a nice pickle. Gamble Gold, Granny, and Neddy are coming over the hills to lunch."

"They can't lunch here," groaned Ossian. "Look at the place."

"We will have lunch down in the field below," said Krab.

"But Gamble Gold always has pineapple ice and shortbread, and we have nothing but beef sandwiches in the larder."

"Tumble the goblins out of the sack," cried Krab, "and hurry."

Ossian tipped the sack out, and they rolled pell-mell on the floor, and sorted themselves out as well as they could.

Krab threw them out of the cave on to the field below. They had just cut the hay, so it was quite soft for them.

Krab stood in front of the cave with a big speaking-horn shouting out his orders. As he called out, each goblin set about his task for all he was worth, for they could see from Krab's manner that it was time to bustle.

"No. 36, fetch three cold chickens and a ham."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said No. 36, as he flew off towards Edinburgh.

"And a packet of Edinburgh Rock," shouted Krab after him. "I hope the fellow heard."

"Nos. 17 to 24, set the table. No. 46, pineapple ice, not more than four hundredweight, mind. No extra-



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gance. No. 12, shortbread, and a few dozen of ginger-beer. No. 16, watercress."

No. 16 wept aloud.

"What's the matter?" asked Krab.

"There's a big rat in the watercress stream," sobbed No. 16.

"Then No. 17 shall go with you, and take each other's hands. Tell the rat if he eats you I'll cut off his whiskers."

Nos. 16 and 17 went off trembling and sobbing. I expect these sobs frightened the rat, for they returned safely with some glorious fresh watercress.

At last all was ready. It was indeed a splendid lunch to spread out in the deserted glen. And just as the Edinburgh goblin returned with the chickens and ham and the Edinburgh Rock, Granny and Neddy and Gamble Gold appeared at the head of the pass.

"We were just in time," said Krab, putting away the speaking trumpet, and wiping his forehead.

"I believe there will be pineapple ice and shortbread," whispered Gamble Gold to Granny, as they came to the field and saw the table spread.

"Hush!" said Granny. "It isn't manners to believe. Anyhow, you mustn't do it aloud."

"He's growing a grand lad," said Krab, eyeing his godson.

"He's the best in the world," said Granny.

"I've known a few of those too," said Krab; "some of them turn out all right."

The bell rang for lunch. Krab took in Granny. Ossian sat next Granny and put Gamble on the other side, so

that Granny couldn't see Gamble's plate. Neddy looked at the luncheon table, shook his head, and walked off to the hayfield.

The goblins were all dressed as waiters now, and flew round with the good things, to every one's delight.

"What have you been doing with the mountain?" asked Granny.

"Painting it blue," said Krab.

"Good gracious!" cried Granny, "and no notice up, saying 'Wet Paint'!"

"But it's dry," said Krab.

"Never mind," said Granny, and she took out her pen and ink and blotting-pad and wrote out a couple of notices. "Put those up, please."

Krab did as he was asked. The notices said "DRY PAINT."

"Now we can lunch safely," she said, helping herself to the wing of a chicken.

And they lunched loud and long.



IV

The Story of Drusilla





CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF DRUSILLA

FTER lunch, at which the pineapple ice and short-bread were voted a great success, Gamble Gold went up the rope ladder into the cave. Here he found the goblins had tidied things up a little and slung up a white string hammock in a corner so that Gamble could have an afternoon sleep. Krab had promised to have a talk with him at tea-time about his new idea of being a King, so that he and Granny could get home to supper. Granny had Ossian's big armchair and a foot-stool placed under a stone wall with its back to the wind, and three goblins sat on the wall with pea shooters to fire at any midges, gnats, or flies that came near to tease Granny whilst she slept. Granny always slept after lunch, and she had pasted up a notice : "Please do not wake me if I snore," so as to be sure that her nap would not be interrupted.

Krab and Ossian sat at the dinner-table smoking big cigars, cracking walnuts and drinking port wine, and all the goblins, except Granny's and two that were guarding the cave, curled up asleep under dock leaves or behind rocks or wherever it was cool and shady.

"The question is," said Krab, "should we send him out into the wide, wide world to be a King?"

"Is he old enough?" asked Ossian.

"He must be over a hundred," said Krab.

"He doesn't look it, you know," said Ossian thoughtfully.

"Perhaps not," replied Krab, "but that is because we have kept him at seven all the time. Seven is a beautiful age, if seven-year-olds only knew it, and being responsible for Gamble Gold I kept him at seven. If he goes out into the wide, wide world he will have to grow up like any one else."

"Certainly," said Ossian. "And then again, does the world want a King, and would the world like being ruled by a seven-year-old?"

"The grown-ups have made an awful mess of it," said Krab gloomily. "Gamble Gold is a clever little child, and of course Granny would go with him. Granny would be his Prime Minister. As long as a King has an old woman for a Prime Minister things would go on much as usual, I expect."

"What about all the Kings and Queens out there now?" asked Ossian, pointing his thumb over his shoulder towards the south.

"Gamble thought that all out, and when he starts being a King of all the world, he is going to give the others a week's holiday."

"Poor things, they want it," said Ossian.

"Then if he's a success," continued Krab, "he thinks they won't want to come back."

"If they did," suggested Ossian, "he might have them beheaded."

Krab shook his head. "No, Gamble Gold wouldn't do



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that. He is a very kind little boy. If they were troublesome he might slap them, perhaps, but he would not really hurt them."

They sat thoughtfully smoking for about half an hour, listening to Granny, who was snoring in G minor about thirty-eight to the minute.

"I should like to write a poem in that metre," said Ossian. "Whose Granny is she?"

"Gamble Gold's, of course," replied Krab.

"Father's mother, or mother's mother?" inquired Ossian.

"No one's mother at all. She's a Granny on her own. She's always been a Granny and always will be. Started at five years old looking after her father and mother, an invalid aunt and three small children, and she has been looking after other people ever since. She'll come and Granny you, if you like."

"No thank you," said Ossian humbly, "I prefer to live the simple life alone."

"She's very fond of books, and she's a great writer herself," said Krab.

"What does she write?" asked Ossian.

"Oh, notices mostly nowadays, but in her young days—" Krab paused and looked at Granny, and then continued: "Look here, Ossian, I'll tell you a secret."

Ossian looked up full of excitement. Krab caught hold of his ear, and pulling his head on to the table whispered into his ear vigorously. Ossian struggled hard to get his ear away, for Krab was hurting him.

"Then she wrote *The Fox and the Crow?*" said Ossian in a hoarse whisper, pointing to Granny.

"Hush!" said Krab, with his finger to his lips.

"And if Gamble goes to the old school she will be——?"

"Hush!" said Krab again.

"Do you think I might propose her health at tea-time, and say how honoured I am to entertain a great writer like——?"

"Hush!" said Krab warningly. "Ladies who write books always keep it very dark, and they don't like to have a fuss made about it."

"Oh!" said Ossian, looking disappointed.

"Besides, Gamble knows nothing about it yet. He thinks she is just Granny."

"And that is what is puzzling me," said Ossian. "How does——"

"Granny," interrupted Krab.

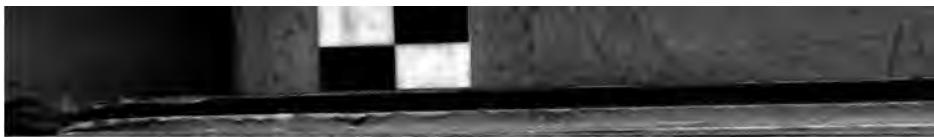
"Yes, Granny. How does Granny come to be looking after Gamble Gold, and who is Gamble Gold, and how do you happen to be his godfather?"

"Now you are asking," said Krab. "I don't mind telling you. You might make a jolly good poem out of it, but if you do you must change the names."

"Certainly," said Ossian.

Then Krab told Ossian the family history of Gamble Gold.

"You remember about a hundred years ago or so, they were making a narrow-gauge railway from Hop Scotch on the border right away to Port Caramel. The railway runs along the shores of Loch Lemon," continued Krab, dipping his finger in the port wine and making a map on the tablecloth, "out on to the Eccles Cake Hills, across the moors of Groustie, up Glen Meringue, over the snowy heights of Blanc Mange until it reaches the



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Inverleafie Forest. Now at that time the forest was full of nymphs and satyrs, and fauns and dryads, and naiads and fairies and what not, all flitting about merrily the livelong day. There were crowds of them, and of course they couldn't go on living there with a horrid noisy, smoky railway running through, so they had a meeting and agreed they would march up to London and get the railway stopped."

"How do you get a railway stopped?" asked Ossian.

"Parliament does it," said Krab.
"Parliament can stop any railway."

"It's a pity it doesn't make some of them move a bit faster," suggested Ossian.

"That's not Parliament's line," said Krab. "Well, all these forest folk had a meeting and a chairman and a committee and appointed a porcupine to be secretary."

"Oh, I remember now," said Ossian. "I offered to be secretary, but they said I only had one quill and there was a lot of writing to be done, so they preferred the porcupine."



JACOB COX.

"Look here," said Krab, "if you keep on interrupting, this story will never be done."

"Sorry," said Ossian. "I won't do it again."

"See you don't," said Krab. "Where was I? Oh—the Porcupine. Well, he wrecked



PORCUPINE ARRIVES IN A HANSOM.



The Story of Drusilla

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the whole business. First of all he couldn't write a line until they pulled out one of his quills, and as that hurt him they didn't like to do it unless it was really necessary ; so a lot of important people never got the circulars. Then in the march up to London they might as well have had a tortoise, he was so slow on his legs. If they told him to hurry, he got fretful. When they reached London, he found an invitation at his hotel to dine with the Keeper of the Natural History Museum. They advised him not to go, but you know what a stuck-up prickly thing a porcupine is. He took a hansom cab, drove off to Kensington, dined with the Keeper, who let him stuff himself with monkey-nuts and then put him in a glass case, numbered him 6081, wrote a short life of his foolishness for the catalogue, and there he is to this day. Left without a secretary, the rest of the committee did not know what to do. They spent all their time and money going to Earl's Court and the Hippodrome and the Zoo, and of course while they were away the railway got built and Inverleafie Forest ceased to be peopled by forest folk."

"I'm jolly glad that Porcupine did get stuffed," said Ossian.

"But though all the satyrs and fauns left the place, the dryads and naiads stayed on. The dryads as wood nymphs had to look after their trees. Each tree, you know, has an attendant dryad. She brushes his bark, uncurls his leaves in the Spring, sees that only the right number of caterpillars are cruising round in the Summer, and picks off the old leaves in the Autumn. Then the naiads have to sing the streams to sleep in the summer and turn off the floods in the winter. So some of them stayed on, and

amongst them was Drusilla, a beautiful wood nymph or dryad, who was parlour-maid and housemaid to a fine old Oak Tree in the middle of Inverleafie Forest. She was a beautiful young thing. She had blue eyes just like little Gamble's, waving sea-green hair, and wore a wreath of mistletoe on her brow that the old Oak Tree had given her. The mistletoe had a lot to do with it as you will see. She always dressed in white muslin spangled with gold, to match her little wings. She stayed on to look after her dear old Oak Tree, for she could not desert him in his old age, though when the smoky railway trains came bustling and clanking through the forest he often bade her fly away and find a young oak tree to care for in some new forest. Drusilla was a faithful creature and might have been with the Oak Tree yet but for the engine-driver.

"His name was Gold—Mr. Gamble Gold, of No. 17, Tank Street, Glasgow. He was a handsome young man of about eight and twenty with curly golden hair and a smiling face."

"Ha! Ha!" interrupted Ossian, "I begin to see things now. The plot thickens!"

Krab frowned. "The plot isn't thick at all," he said angrily. "It's as clear as soup."

"Soup may be either thick or clear, for that matter," said Ossian, winking in an aggravating manner.

"Well," said Krab, "then it's as clear as noon-day."

"I've known that foggy up here," chuckled Ossian.

"Then it's as clear as a bell," shouted Krab, who was growing furious with Ossian.

"My dinner bell is cracked," laughed Ossian.



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This was too much for Krab. He reached over the table and caught hold of Ossian by his collar and shook



DRUSILLA AND THE OLD OAK.

him violently. "I tell you," he said, "this plot is as clear as a whistle."

"You didn't," said Ossian, who was choking, "you said 'soup' and 'noon-day' and 'bell.' If you'd said 'whistle' I should have understood."

"Then perhaps it was my fault," said Krab, leaving go of his collar and holding out his hand to Ossian in a friendly way.

They shook hands, drank each other's health twice in port wine, and Ossian having promised not to interrupt again, Krab continued the story :

"Mr. Gold drove the engine of a coal train all through the night, with his stoker, old Jacob Coke. The engine's name was 'Puffing Billy.' One summer night the signal was against them and they pulled up close to the Oak Tree in Inverleafie Forest. Gold was looking out into the woods when he saw a beautiful face gazing at him from the top branch of the Oak Tree. The lady seemed to be leaning lightly on the branch of the tree, and when she noticed that Mr. Gold had caught sight of her, she pulled some leaves over her face, though he was sure she was still peeping.

"That lovely face was in his mind all night. He saw it in tunnels and in railway stations and signal lamps, and he dreamed of it all day when he was resting on his horse-hair sofa in his stuffy little room at No. 17, Tank Street, Glasgow. It is pleasant to dream of anything beautiful in Glasgow, and Gold felt much refreshed when he started on his night's journey. That evening the signals were with them and he need not have stopped in the forest at all, but he did, and his engine came to a standstill opposite the old Oak Tree.

"'What's up, Guv'nor?' asked old Jacob Coke. 'Signal's all right, Puffing Billy's all right. What's up?'

"'Hush!' whispered Gold. 'I believe she's there.' 'Who? Where? What?' cried old Coke.



GOLD KISSING THE HAND OF DRUSILLA.

"Oh, Beautiful One, I shall wait here until you show your beautiful face," cried out Gold in a loud voice.

"There was no movement in the tree.

"I shall wait here all night until I see you, oh fair Unseen One," said Gold, with a sob in his voice; "the people of Port Caramel will have no coals for their kitchen fire, and no bacon or eggs or toast for breakfast. Think of that, hard-hearted beauty."

"There was no movement in the tree.

"And if I am late," continued Gold, "I shall not be allowed to drive the engine any more, and I shall never be able to come here again."

"There was a soft cry from under the oak leaves, two white arms stretched out of the thick foliage, and the beautiful face of Drusilla smiled lovingly at Gold.

Drusilla had never had a mother, and did not know what she ought to say on an occasion like this. What she did say was: "You are very beautiful and I love you. Speed on to-night. Come early to-morrow."

"Darling!" murmured Gold as he climbed up the smoke-stack of Puffing Billy, and standing on tiptoe kissed her little hands tenderly. "To-night I must hasten, to-morrow will come at last. Full speed ahead, Jacob!" He blew the whistle and sped into the darkness.

"For some hours neither spoke. At last Gold said: 'Jacob, have you ever been in love?'

"Jacob laughed. "Have I ever been in love? Have I ever had measles or whooping-cough? Lots of times, Guv'nor."

"You cannot be in love lots of times," said Gold, frowning. "Are you in love now?"

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"Rather!" said Jacob.

"Who with?" asked Gold.

"Puffing Billy," replied Coke, patting him fervently on the boiler. "Dear old Puffing Billy." And to cheer his master's spirits, old Jacob sat on the safety-valve and sang him a song he had made up about Puffing Billy:

"THE STOKER'S SONG."

"The job I've got
Is tough and hot
At thirty bob a week,
My iron moke
I have to stoke,
And keep it clean and sleek.
He's a hungry beast
And he eats at least
Three tons or so a day,
And the size of thirst
With which he's cursed
You cannot quench with hay.

"It may be foolish, and it may be silly,
But one kind snort from Puffing Billy
Draws tears to the eyes of Jacob Coke,
And is much more likely to make him choke
Than a cloud of the worst tobacco smoke.
For Billy and Jacob are old, old friends,
And they'll stick to it till the journey ends.

"I know, of course,
A four-legged horse
Is the faithful friend of man.
And your motor-car
Is popular
With the chauffeur's Mary Ann.
And small boys state
We are out of date

And it's time we were on the shelf;
But to carry the mails
Over mountain trails
On a couple of rails
When it snows and hails
And blows big gales,
Why!—there's nowt like Billy and Self.

"It may be foolish, and it may be silly,
But one kind snort from Puffing Billy
Draws tears to the eyes of Jacob Coke,
And is much more likely to make him choke
Than a cloud of the worst tobacco smoke.
For Billy and Jacob are old, old friends,
And they'll stick to it till the journey ends.

The song soothed Gold and he slept quietly on the coaldust in the tender. The next night——"

"You've been too long over that story," said Granny, waking up, "it's tea-time."

"Not a bit," said Ossian. "It's not nearly tea-time."

"When I want my tea, it's tea-time," said Granny.

"Where is the kettle?"

"We haven't got a kettle," said Ossian.

"What a place!" said Granny.

"We've a hot tap," said Ossian proudly.

"I know them," said Granny—"they run cold for half an hour."

"An hour," interrupted Ossian; "then tepid for half an hour, then——"

"Rubbish!" said Granny. "Luckily I've brought the kettle. I wouldn't go across the road without the kettle. You never know when you may want a dish of tea. Call Gamble Gold and let us have tea and be going."

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"But what about the story?" said Ossian and Krab together.

"That settles the story," said Granny, hastily writing out a notice and pinning it on the ham which stood on the sideboard.

Krab and Ossian ran to the sideboard and read it eagerly. It said :

"To be continued in our next."



V

The Story Continued



— "Lambeth and the

CHAPTER V

THE STORY CONTINUED



NYMPH SINGS.

"We might as well finish the story — there is not much more of it," said Krab, "and it takes Granny three-quarters of an hour to get tea ready."

They strolled up the road together, leaving Granny and the goblins busy collecting sticks.

"Where was I?" asked Krab.

"You were beginning about the next night," answered Ossian.

"So I was. Well, the next night Drusilla asked the Oak Tree whether she might have a night out, as she

was keeping company with an engine-driver. The Oak Tree very kindly said she might do so, and putting on all her best gauze clothes, she waited for Mr. Gold, and as soon as he drew up his engine near the tree, she fluttered down on to the coals and said to him: 'I will go with you to-night.'

"Gold jumped up and sat by her side. 'You drive the engine,' he cried to old Jacob.

"'It's against the rules having any one on board the engine,' said Jacob.

"'Where are the rules?' asked Gold.

"Jacob produced a copy from his coat pocket. 'It says, "No person shall travel on the engine—"'

"'That's all right,' said Gold. 'Drusilla is not a person.'

"'I think she is,' said Jacob, who was given to arguing. 'Feminine gender, first person singular, I should say.'

"'I hope she will be first person plural some day,' said Gold, gazing at her lovingly.

"Drusilla blushed. 'I'm not a person at all, Mr. Coke,' she said sweetly; 'I'm a wood nymph.'

"There was nothing about wood nymphs in the company's rules, so Jacob blew the whistle, and Puffing Billy again rumbled over the mountain whilst Drusilla and Gold sat together on the coals whispering nothing in particular very earnestly. When they came to a tunnel Mr. Gold could not persuade Drusilla to venture into it. So they said many farewells, and Drusilla flitted back to the Oak Tree, and Puffing Billy made for the north. After this voyage, Drusilla had seven nights out every week, and spent them as I have described, and she and Gold became engaged to be married, and he gave her a diamond ring;

The Story Continued

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and she began to knit him a pair of stockings, and although these were never finished, they gave the simple engine-driver much pleasure.

"' When are you going to be married, my dear ? ' asked the Oak Tree, as Drusilla sat knitting her stocking, and waiting and listening for the train.

"' I can never get married,' said Drusilla, 'for I cannot leave you, and Mr. Gold cannot live in the woods.'

" The Oak Tree sighed. ' I'm in the way, am I ? ' he thought, but he said nothing.

"' Don't sigh, my dear old friend,' said Drusilla. ' I'm very happy as I ain.'

"' That's all very well,' thought the Oak Tree, 'but I'm a selfish old brute keeping her here, and I must clear out.'

" Seated in his topmost branches, swaying backwards and forwards, Drusilla was singing half to herself a song she had made up to the music of the evening breeze :

" SONG OF DRUSILLA.

" Knit three purl one,
That's the way the stocking's done
Whilst I'm sitting
With my knitting
On the old oak tree.
But it's weary,
Sad and dreary,
Waiting, love, for thee.

" Owls shout out to-whit, to-whoo !
What do owls know, darling ?
Little more than thrush or starling.
Have they wit ?
Not a bit,
We could teach them all to woo.

Gamble Gold

"Art thou coming up the valley
To the old oak tree?
I'm like Sally in her Alley
Waiting here for thee.
Whilst the night grows still and stiller
Patiently waits thy Drusilla
Waiting here for thee.
Naughty mocking-birds are mocking
At the progress of my stocking
As I'm sitting
With my knitting
Wondering if the stocking's fitting
And the bob-tailed bats are flitting
Round the old oak tree.

"Do I hear a whistle shrieking ?
Is it dear old Billy speaking
To his little friend that's sitting on the tree ?
I am bringing home your true love,
Bringing Gamble home to you, love ;
When I bring him will you save a smile for me ?

"Puffing Billy, Puffing Billy,
Can't you learn, you dear old silly,
Such things cannot be ?
Though I know that you are hurrying,
And worrying,
And skurrying,
And rushing through the world to come to me,
I have only smiles for one, dear,
And when those smiles are done, dear,
There is nothing left but sighs and tears for me.
For again I shall be sitting
All lonely with my knitting
While the bob-tailed bats are flitting
Round the tree.

"That night Gamble Gold was driving a passenger train,
and the passengers could not make out why the train
stopped in the middle of the wood. They looked out to

The Story Continued 73

see, and to their surprise saw Gamble Gold and Jacob Coke and Drusilla dancing round the Oak Tree. It was a pretty sight, and most of the passengers enjoyed it, because Gamble and Drusilla were very graceful



DANCING ROUND THE OAK.

dancers, and old Jacob had some quaint steps only known to himself. He called his dance the Coke Walk. It was quite his own. Puffing Billy did not dance—but he blew Scotch reels for them with his whistle.

"Guard, what is the meaning of this?" shouted an old gentleman with a white waistcoat who seemed very angry.

"He was a railway director, and was leaning out of the open door of a first-class dining saloon with a glass of champagne in one hand and a mince-pie in the other.

"It's all right, sir," said the guard, touching his hat, as he hurried up to the saloon door. "It's all right, sir, they are engaged to be married."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the old gentleman, biting off a chunk of mince-pie.

"Say "Puss!"" said the guard, touching his hat respectfully.

"Now, you cannot say 'Puss!' when your mouth is full, and it is unwise to try. The director remembered having been nearly choked when he was a little boy in trying to say 'Puss!' in the middle of a jam tart, and he was not going to be caught again.

"He finished his munching quite slowly and then said severely to the guard: 'This kind of thing cannot be allowed. A man who would stop an express train to dance with a wood nymph is unfit to be an engine-driver.'

"Make him a railway director, then," said the guard, and he pushed the old gentleman into his carriage and slammed the door upon him.

"And that is how it happened. Mr. Gold was not allowed to drive an engine any more, and so he became a railway director. For it is easier to direct a railway than an engine or an elephant or even an envelope.

"Now the new engine-driver would not stop the train

The Story Continued

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in the middle of the wood, as he was in a hurry to get home to his wife and children, and though Mr. Gold went by the train every night, all he could do was to wave his hand to Drusilla as they passed the Oak Tree. This made Drusilla very sad, but still she would not leave the Oak Tree, and Mr. Gold could not come and live in the gay green woods, for the other railway directors would not hold their meetings there, as they were all old and rheumatic, and said that the woods were damp and unpleasant. Then it was that the Oak Tree showed what a noble, great-hearted fellow he was. He sent for a woodman and had himself cut down. He told me what he was going to do, the day before it happened, and his last request was that he should be made into a suite of dining-room furniture for a wedding present for Drusilla, and that I would take care of her until she was married.

"Poor Drusilla was heart-broken at first, but when she saw her old friend in the shape of a sideboard and six chairs and a table, and an old-fashioned settle, she was quite eager to be married.

"That was a marriage, I can tell you. All the world and his wife were there. It took place, of course, at St. George's, Hanover Square. I gave the bride away, also the dining-room furniture. Jacob Coke was Mr. Gold's best man. All the bridesmaids were wood nymphs and flew to church. The cake was decorated with safety-valves and oak-leaves in white sugar.

"But sad to say it did not lead to happiness. Dear little Drusilla was scarcely fitted for what is known as society. When she went to an 'at home' she would

fly round the room and sit on gas brackets or the top rails of chairs. Old ladies who could not do these things called her fast and flighty. When she went out to dinner, it grieved her kind heart to see a hare or a rabbit or even a spring chicken on a dish, and she thought it cruel of the cook to boil caterpillars in the cauliflowers, especially as no one seemed to want to eat them when they were discovered.

"At a garden-party she made enemies for herself by talking to the trees instead of the visitors. She was really very shy, and a chat with a piece of real old timber was a great treat to her. Had she known how many of her fine friends had very wooden heads, she might have talked to them more freely, and made friends of them too.

"As for poor Mr. Gold, having lost his position as an engine-driver, he seemed to feel the disgrace of being a mere railway director very deeply. He was not a great success in fashionable drawing-rooms, for he was always putting two fingers in his mouth and whistling violently and waving his arms and shouting 'Right away!' It did not seem to amuse the grown-ups in the drawing-room, but Mr. Gold was very welcome in every nursery, because he was never tired of playing railway trains with the children for as long as they were ready to play with him.

"After a time they went to live in the country near Crewe, where Mr. Gold could see plenty of railway trains, and Mrs. Gold could meet some fine old trees. Here they were much happier, and here some hundred years ago our little friend Gamble was born.

"Sad to say, soon after that poor Drusilla faded away.

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She was never fitted for life in the harsh world, and she became an evening cloud and used to wear lovely dresses of gold and red and orange, and play the chief part in some of the best sunsets that have ever been acted.

"Little Gamble Gold was left to me to look after. I placed him at seven years old with Granny, and he has been with her ever since."

"And Mr. Gold—what became of him?" asked Ossian.

"He went from bad to worse," said Krab. "They



DRUSILLA BECOMES AN EVENING CLOUD.

found he couldn't direct a railway, so they made him a member of Parliament. He was no good at that, so they made him a marquis. Then he sank lower and lower, until he became a Cabinet Minister, then they buried him in Westminster Abbey, and quite time, too, poor fellow. Ha! there is little Gamble calling. Tea will be ready."

Tea was ready. Granny poured out. Gamble Gold handed things round like a good little boy, and then started on bread and butter.

"Well, Godfather," he asked when they were all settled, "what do you think of my new idea?"

"I think it's an excellent idea," said Krab.

"Hear, hear!" shouted Gamble.

"Order! Order!" shouted Ossian.

Granny hastily wrote out a notice and put it in the toast rack: "The next person who interrupts will be smacked."

"I think it is an excellent idea," continued Krab. "As I understand it, you intend to be a King."

"A King over all the whole world," said Gamble.

"Quite so," said Krab, "and that is a good idea, because you can't have any quarrels or fights with other kings."

"There won't be any," said Gamble, smiling.

"What are you going to do with the old ones?" asked Ossian.

"They will have a week's holiday," said Krab.

"And at the end of the week?" asked Ossian.

"You give them another week," said Krab.

Gamble nodded.

"Of course there are things to be considered," said Krab thoughtfully.

"What sort of things?" said Gamble.

"In the first place a King ought to know everything."

"Don't I know everything?" asked Gamble, in innocent surprise.

"Every seven-year-old knows everything in a way," said Krab, patting Gamble's head. "But when he grows up, everything grows up too, and everything grows much quicker than the seven-year-old, and so at seventy he gets left."

Gamble Gold did not quite understand it. "How do you learn everything?" he asked.

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"You go to school as a rule," said Krab, "where they teach you nothing, and there, if you keep your wits about you, you may learn everything. The only school worth going to, if you want to be a King, is Pappa Westray's school in the Awkward Islands."

"He was Professor of Everything at the University of Cheadle, wasn't he?" asked Ossian.

"And won all the Challenge Cups at the Olympian Games," said Granny.

"And played for Oxford and Cambridge on the same day," said Krab.

"He couldn't," said Ossian.

"He did," said Krab.

"Impossible," said Ossian.

"I was there," said Krab.

"How did he do it then?" said Ossian.

"At the supper after the cricket match he played the harp—'See the conquering hero comes,' first for Oxford, and then for Cambridge."

"They couldn't both be conquering heroes," grumbled Ossian.

"But they were," answered Krab sharply, for he was getting vexed at Ossian's foolishness. "It was a drawn match."

"How long shall I stay at the school?" asked Gamble, eager to change the subject.

"Until you get a kingship," replied Krab. "Those who want to be scholars go to school to get scholarships; you want to be a king, and at Pappa Westray's school you will have a chance of getting a kingship. A small one to begin with, no doubt, but once a King you can work out

the rest of your new idea for yourself. There is one other thing, however, that I ought to tell you about."

"What is that?" asked Gamble.

"At present you are only seven years old."

"I always have been seven years old, haven't I, God-father?"

"For a very long time you have," said Krab, "but now if you go out into the wide, wide world, you will grow up."

"How fast?" asked Gamble anxiously.

"Slowly at first, and quicker afterwards," said Krab seriously. "But you will grow up and the question you must settle before you start is, do you want to grow up?"

"I think I do," said Gamble, after a little pause, looking at Krab and wondering what it would be like to have a grey beard and wrinkles.

Krab noticed his puzzled look. "I don't want to frighten you," he continued; "you won't grow up all at once, you will be eight in a bit, and then more, and so on, and for many years you will feel quite young, but slowly and surely you will grow up. I remember meeting Old Age for the first time, and I thought him a tedious old duffer, but when you've lived with him a few years, you find that he's not a bad companion."

"Well, Godfather," said little Gamble, "I'll risk growing up; every one else seems to do it, so why shouldn't I?"

"I think you are quite right, my boy. I thought you would want to grow up some day, but there was no hurry about it, and a hundred years or so at seven years old in a quiet country spot like Glen Guile is a good start for any lad. The next question is, how are you going?"

The Story Continued

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"I shall sail down the lake in the canoe with Budge," said Gamble.

"What about Granny?" asked Krab.

"No canoe for me," called out Granny.

"How are you going?" asked Ossian, turning to Granny.

"That's my business," said Granny snappily; "perhaps I'm not going at all. Perhaps I'm going on Neddy, but there's no 'perhaps' about the canoe."

Gamble was now packing up the kettle and the other things for Neddy to carry home, as it was nearly time for them to set out to Glen Guile, and he was so excited and delighted to know that he was to go out into the wide, wide world, that I fear he was thinking very little of the sorrow it would be to Granny to part with him.

Krab was quite sad when the time came to say good-bye.

"You have been my little boy for so long," he said to Gamble Gold, "that I began to believe you would belong to me all my life. But things don't happen that way, and of course you wanted to belong to yourself just like any other little boy."

"You are talking terrible nonsense," said Granny, sniffing vigorously, "and I don't like it, and it makes my eyes water. I'm not going to part with him, whether he grows up or whether he doesn't."

"Of course not, Granny dear," said Gamble.

"Well, Time will show," said Krab. "Time has a lot of curious things to show you, Gamble, out in the wide, wide world."

"That is why I want to go there, Godfather," said Gamble.

And Krab lightly put his hands on little Gamble's curls, and drawing him towards his knees, leaned down and kissed him softly on the brow, saying: "Go out into the world, and be a King, for they want a little child to show them how to do the business, and I do not know any little boy who could do it better, for you have been seven years old for a long time, and it is a wise age."

And Gamble Gold kissed Krab and said modestly: "Godfather, I think you are quite right."



VI

Down the River





GAMBLE SETS SAIL.

CHAPTER VI

DOWN THE RIVER

GRANNY kept her word and refused to have anything to do with going by canoe herself, but she helped Gamble Gold to pack up his things and label them, and it was settled that he and Budge should go by canoe.

"And how are you going, Granny dear?" asked Gamble.

"They don't want grannies in the wide, wide world, dearie."

"Nonsense!" said Gamble Gold. "I do, anyhow, and

you must come on Neddy or the broomstick if you won't go in the canoe."

"Well, I'll see about it later on," said Granny.

And with that Gamble was well content, for he was full of excitement about the packing and the journey and was in a great hurry to make a start.

The packing was not very troublesome, for Granny had an old Gladstone bag which she gave Gamble Gold to take with him. It was a real Gladstone bag made of very thick hide, and whatever you wanted you asked for, and the bag gave it you. A bag like that saves a deal of trouble.

Gamble Gold spent many hours of his last day at Glen Guile, saying good-bye to his sheep and lambs and giving them good advice. It had troubled him lately to see that even the mother sheep would try and eat the same piece of grass, and when their noses met would butt at each other for several minutes and then walk away and sulk and forget all about the grass they were fighting over.

Gamble Gold had a Mothers' Meeting about that, and pointed out to them how shocking their conduct was and how they could hardly expect their little lambs to grow up into good little sheep if they set such a bad example. The mother sheep promised to be better in future, and Gamble Gold went round to all the lambs and told them that he was going away and they must be good and kind to each other, and do all their mothers told them, and the lambs lifted up their little black faces to be kissed and said they would try hard.

It was a bright sunny morning when Gamble Gold

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started from Glen Guile out into the wide, wide world to be a King. He was sorry to leave Granny, but he felt sure he was right to go, and Granny seemed to think so too.

"You can't start that guy, you know," said Granny after breakfast.

Gamble looked at his skin mantle and sandals. "What is the matter with them?" he asked.

"Nothing at all," replied Granny, "but if you sail a boat in the wide, wide world, you do it in a sailor suit."

"Why?" asked Gamble Gold.

"Why not?" replied Granny, catching hold of the Gladstone bag.

She shouted "Sailor suit" three times and then opened it and took out a rough blue sailor suit with a white collar and a straw hat with a gold band marked "H.M.S. Pick-a-back." *The Pick-a-back* was the name of Gamble Gold's canoe. It was an Indian canoe with an orange silk sail.

Gamble dressed himself up in his sailor suit and felt more like a King than ever, and then they went down to the boat landing, for it was time to start. Granny tied several labels on to the Gladstone bag, Budge, the canoe, and Gamble, marked "Passenger to Pappa Westray's school." The bag was put on board, Budge jumped in first and went fast asleep in the middle of the canoe. Then Gamble Gold said farewell to Granny, and pushing the canoe off, leaped into it as it left the shore and paddled towards the middle of the lake, where there was a chance of a breeze. Granny and the cow and Neddy and the sheep and the lambs and the kettle stood waving on the shore, and Gamble, as he hoisted his sail, waved back to them. Then he set his silk sail and whistled for the



breeze to come, and a purple ripple ran across the lake to where his canoe floated lazily on the water, and the breeze that ran after the ripple filled the little sail and wafted him southward out into the wide, wide world.

At the end of the lake there is a river and at the end of the river there is the sea, and at the end of the sea is the wide, wide world. Granny had told Gamble Gold all that, and Gamble was very eager, as all little boys are, to get to the seaside, for he had never been there yet. It was a very hot day. The canoe glided smoothly onward. Gamble Gold steered with the paddle, but there was no need for much steering as *The Pick-a-back* knew how to steer herself in so gentle a breeze. Budge was fast asleep dreaming of rabbits and Gamble himself had closed his eyes to think, and had gone on thinking with his eyes shut for quite a long time, when he heard a shout, and looking up, found that he had left the lake and was gliding down the river whilst a wild Highland Chieftain in a red, blue, and yellow tartan kilt was running along the bank of the river waving a claymore at him and shouting out to him to stop.

Gamble Gold, who was always kind and courteous to every one, lowered his sail, and stopping his canoe, turned it towards the land. Budge was barking furiously at the Chieftain, but Gamble told him to lie down and be quiet, which he did with a very bad grace, licking his lips fiercely and glaring at the Chieftain's bare legs.

"What is all the noise about?" asked Gamble Gold.

"I am the MacHaggis," shouted the Chieftain.

"Well," said Gamble, "you can't help that."

"Help it!" shouted the Chieftain. "Do you mean to insult the MacHaggis here where he stands with his foot upon his native heath?"

He spoke with a strong Scotch accent that made it very difficult for Gamble to understand him.



THE MACHAGGIS.

"Buttercups, you mean," said Gamble Gold.

"Did you pass those trees at the end of the lake?" asked the Chieftain, paying no heed to the interruption.

"I must have done," answered Gamble.

"Then you are a Tree-passenger," said the MacHaggis fiercely, "and Tree-passers must be prosecuted. It says so on the board."

"But I didn't see the board," said Gamble; "my eyes were shut at the time and I was thinking."

"It doesn't matter," said the Chieftain, "you are clearly a Tree-passenger, and you must come on shore and be prosecuted."

"What are you going to prosecute me with?"

"This!" said the MacHaggis, waving the claymore wildly round his head.

Budge jumped up and barked more wildly and fiercely than ever.

"Very well," said Gamble Gold, "if I must be prosecuted I must, only take care of your legs, for when Budge comes on shore he will go for them."

"Hold!" cried the Chieftain. "Let me pause to reflect. This gives me food for thought."

Gamble Gold was in no hurry to be prosecuted, so he stopped his canoe among the rushes some yards from the bank. Then the Chieftain paused to reflect by gazing at himself in a pool in the river. After he had reflected for a few minutes he sat on a rock on the shore and munched quietly.

"What are you munching?" called out Gamble.

"Food for thought," replied the Chieftain. "It should always be eaten slowly!"

After he had munched for a little time he called out to Gamble Gold: "Can you play ducks and drakes?"

"Of course I can," replied Gamble.

"Good at it?" asked MacHaggis anxiously.

"Jolly good," said Gamble. "I can beat Granny."

The Chieftain whistled.

Down the River

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"Granny is a bit of a champion," said Gamble Gold, "but I beat her."

The Chieftain looked scared. "Suppose instead of ducks and drakes we have a fight. It's a long time since I had a fight, but I think I could beat you."

"I don't fight," replied Gamble, smiling.

"Why not?" asked the Chieftain.

"Well, for one thing Granny doesn't approve of it, and then, you see, I never had any brothers and sisters to fight with."

"Poor little chap!" said the Chieftain, "then we will have a contest at ducks and drakes."

Gamble agreed, and pushed his canoe to the bank and jumped out. It was settled they should have three shies each.

"What about flat stones?" asked Gamble.

"You bring your own," answered the Chieftain. "I always play with pennies. My last three," he added, pulling them out of his pocket.

Gamble could find no flat stones as it was all meadow land, so he opened his Gladstone bag and luckily found a big slate which he broke into three pieces. The Gladstone bag began a long and interesting lecture upon the origin of "ducks and drakes," proving that Homer could play the game even when he was blind. It was with some difficulty that Budge and Gamble shut him up.

"Who is umpire?" asked the Chieftain.

"Budge, of course," shouted Gamble, who was quite excited.

The Chieftain went first. He crooked the penny inside his first finger, arched his head on one side, bent down

till his arm was close to the water's edge, and shut one eye to make sure of his aim. The penny hit the water five yards from the shore and leaped along the surface, Budge barking sharply each time the penny hit the water. There were three barks and the penny disappeared.

"It should have been five," said the Chieftain angrily to Budge.

Budge shook his ears, and Gamble Gold took up his position and threw his first piece of slate. It struck the water and gave one long leap, then a constant run of little leaps and struck the opposite bank, and then a wonderful thing happened, for it came back across the water again on the rebound, Budge barking furiously all the time until it landed at Gamble's feet.

"Thirty-eight," said Gamble Gold, as Budge sank exhausted on the grass, panting for breath.

The Chieftain burst into tears. "I cannot play like that," he cried; "the MacHaggis is defeated. Let the pibroch hide its head under its wing and the rowan droop its feathers, and the sporran no longer shout for joy upon the moor—the MacHaggis has met his fate."

Kneeling down he acknowledged Gamble Gold to be the greatest hero he had ever met, and promised that when he should be a King, the clan of MacHaggis would flock to his banner whenever he raised it.

Gamble was very pleased with his first adventure, and allowed the Chieftain to kiss his hand, and ordered Budge to extend to him the paw of friendship. When this was done, Gamble commanded the Chieftain to continue his work of guarding the river, and stopping all tree-passers except Granny, and having received his promise that this should

Down the River

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be attended to, he once more entered the canoe and slipped away down the river.

The river widened as they got nearer to the sea, and from time to time there were different channels, but no sign-posts saying where they went to, so that Gamble Gold was puzzled as to whether or not he was on his right path, for he had never been to the seaside before. He was getting a little anxious about losing his way when a salmon leaped out of the river, calling out, in a very melancholy tone: "Where are you off to?"

"To the sea," replied Gamble.

"Nothing like the sea for toothache or temper or tantrums," shouted the Salmon.

"I haven't got any of them," said Gamble.

"I've the lot," said the Salmon sadly, "and my liver is out of order, too. What a pace your boat goes. I'm very tired—I suppose you couldn't give me a lift as far as the salt water?"

"Of course I could," said Gamble kindly, "but I'm not quite sure of the way."

"Oh, that's all right. I know every inch of the way, and I will show you," said the Salmon, "if you will take me on board."

"Capital!" cried Gamble. "Jump in, and you shall steer."

The Salmon gave a leap out of the waves into the middle of the canoe and landed on Budge's back. Budge was asleep, dreaming as usual of rabbits. He woke up, and thinking the Salmon was a rabbit, was nearly gobbling him up, when Gamble Gold threw his arms round the fish to protect him and called Budge off. The matter being explained to Budge, he said that he was sorry and

went off to sleep again. Gamble got a clothes brush out of the Gladstone bag and brushed down the poor old Salmon's scales, and then opened him a stone bottle of ginger-beer which seemed to refresh him greatly. At Gamble's request the Salmon took the paddle and steered the canoe, and he seemed to know every turn of the river. At first he looked ill and tired, but as the river widened out and the sea breezes came up from the west he cheered up and seemed in better heart.

"Do you come down this river often?" asked Gamble.

"Every year, of course," replied the Salmon. "When I'm in the river I long to get to the sea, and when I'm in the sea, I long to be up the river."

"Why don't you do the longing the other way about?" asked Gamble, for it sounded to him a rather foolish idea.

"That would never do," said the Salmon, "for if I longed for the sea when I was in the sea, I should stay in the sea just like any ordinary cod-fish, and never go up the river at all. Every one goes to the seaside in the season."

"Do they?" asked Gamble.

"Every one who is 'any one,'" answered the Salmon haughtily. "All our family do—even the potted ones stay with seaside grocers when the season is on."

"It must be jolly moving about like that every year. Where do you go to?"

"Blackpool," said the Salmon.

"Always the same place?" asked Gamble Gold.

"There is only one place," replied the Salmon—"Blackpool! Dear old Breezy Blackpool. Blackpool the Beautiful. Blackpool the Boisterous. Blackpool the Brightest and the Best. Ha! ha! I shall soon be there!"



GAMBLE BRUSHING DOWN THE SALMON.

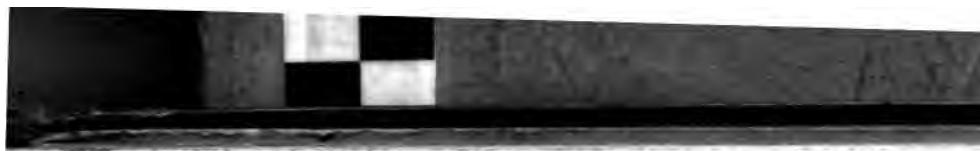
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ANSWER

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As the Salmon finished his song the wave was breaking
mercifully over the rocks gulls were wheeling about over
their heads calling out a welcome to them, and the salt
water reached their cheeks for they were passing a white
waterfall on a rock, and the river was gone.

"This is 'an act!'" shouted the Salmon.
And he leaped high out of the bear, plunged headlong
into a house with disappearance.



VII

The Half-Way Halibut



CHAPTER VII

THE HALF-WAY HALIBUT

DIFFERENT schools teach in different ways, and no two schools are quite alike. Some turn out boys fit to be men of business ; some turn out boys fit to play cricket and football ; some turn out boys fit for nothing whatever. Pappa Westray's school was different from any I have ever heard of. It was a school for young kings. He had noticed that poor little kings got brought up anyhow. Even quite ragged little boys had special schools for themselves, and naughty boys had training ships, but little princes had to go anywhere they could, and their education got terribly neglected. Pappa Westray was not particular about a small boy being a prince, he allowed any lad to come to the school who wanted to be a king and be taught by him how to be a king ; whether or not he went into the king business afterwards, that was his look-out. Some of Pappa Westray's pupils did and some did not, but they were all properly educated for the job, and that was something.

Pappa Westray had all sorts of funny ways of getting pupils to come to the school. He did not advertise in the papers, for he knew better ways than that. For instance, he made an arrangement with the Zephyrs that any

Zephyr who brought a small boy to his school should have a pound of dew-drops to eat when she liked and three yards of rainbow, double width, to make herself a blouse. That made the Zephyrs look sharp out for small boys who wanted to be kings, and they were very cunning at capturing them.

Whenever the Zephyrs saw one they tried to carry him off. This very afternoon three Zephyrs had found a small boy flying his kite in some fields in the Isle of Man. They tried to lift him off his feet and had just succeeded and were dragging him along, skimming over the grass, when his father ran up and took the kite from him.

"What a wonderful current of air this kite has reached," said his father, struggling hard to hold it in.

At that moment one of the Zephyrs saw Gamble Gold's canoe floating lazily in the Mull of Cantire, and she called to the others, and away they all rushed, leaving the kite to fall suddenly to the ground.

This puzzled the little boy's father very much, and he wrote to *The Spectator* about it.

The Zephyrs soon filled Gamble's little sail, and away sped the canoe leaping over the waves. Budge put his nose over the side and growled doubtfully when he saw that the land where the rabbits lived was fast disappearing, but Gamble Gold patted his head and he went to sleep again quite contentedly, for he believed in the wisdom of his master with a faith that is only given to dogs who are owned by small boys.

That was a pleasant voyage. The Zephyrs whispered songs of the sea into Gamble Gold's ears and he forgot



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all about Granny and the old home, for now he was on his own in the wide, wide world, and his little mind was full of the glory of sending the rushing canoe over the beautiful waves. On they went through the grey tides in the Sound of Iona and across the Firth of Lorne into the quiet waters that lie between Kerrara and the mainland, until they had passed the white lighthouse on Lismore and entered the Sound of Mull.

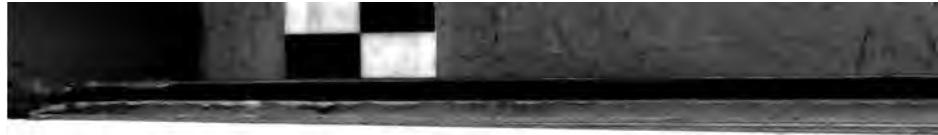
Now the Sound of Mull on a rough day is like the sound of runs on piano organs, and the tearing of calico, and the complaining of seamews, and the quarrelsomeness of cats in the night-time. But the Sound of Mull on a calm day, when the sea is a mirror and the proud beautiful violet hills gaze at themselves in her glass, is like the sound of the flutes of fauns and nymphs stealing through the beech-woods into the warm sunny fields.

Even Budge woke up to look at the beautiful mountains, and shook his purple coat and snorted to think of the rabbits on their green slopes. Gamble Gold, with one arm on the paddle and the other round Budge's neck, gazed at the mist wreaths that crowned the mountain tops and felt that this was really the best sail he had eyer had. But the Zephyrs were getting uneasy and blew their hardest, for they knew that they were drawing near the fishing-grounds of the Half-way Halibut, and they had lost many a promising pupil of Pappa Westray's at this spot.

The Half-way Halibut was an old-fashioned fish who had lived for a long time at the bottom of the sea and did not mean to leave it. He had no ambition to lie on big blocks of ice or be handed round on china plates, or

mix with stuck-up silver knives and forks. The sea was good enough for him.

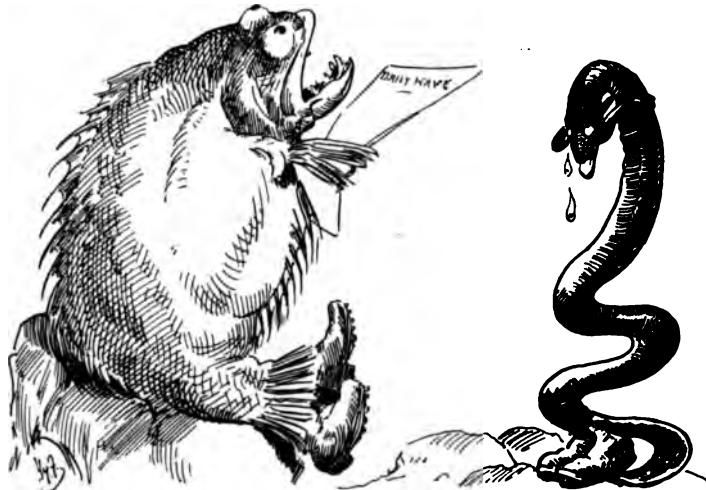
Many years ago—perhaps centuries—when he was quite a young flipper, and long before he wore spectacles, he had had an adventure. He met a long wriggling sand-worm hanging all by itself about two feet off the top sand-blanket of the bed of the ocean. Having, like many another youngster, a bad habit of bolting his food, he rushed at the sand-worm and gobbled him up. Oh, what a pain he felt in his nose! Before he could say "Jack Sprat" he was drawn up to the surface so rapidly that he had no time to back water with his fins. He saw a black boat and a lot of men—like huge oysters with red beards—who plunged their arms into the sea to pull him out. He gave a last wild flip with his tail. Then his nose broke and he fainted and fell back on his bed—or rather the bed of the ocean, which he borrowed for the occasion—and there he lay asleep and remembered nothing more until he woke up in the morning with a very sore nose, but otherwise alive and kicking. After this he never tasted sand-worms until he had kicked them with his tail and found that they did not dart upwards. So cautious was he that he never had another accident, and grew up to be a very old fish indeed, and the seals and whales called him Old Man Halibut and were very civil to him. In his later years he saved up a great fortune of cockle-shells and bought a fishing of his own off Ardnamurchan Point, which was half-way between Pappa Westray's school and the rest of the world. There he was very successful in catching small boys who ventured out that way in boats. These he



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found both nourishing and sustaining, and he lived a long and merry life.

Old Man Halibut had got out of bed that morning on the mournful side. He was sitting with his back to a green seaweed rock, his spectacles bedimmed with tears,



THE LAY OF THE LAST LIMPET.

reading *The Daily Wave*, and every now and then sobbing deeply.

"What is the matter, old man?" asked his friend the Conger, who had come round from Ireland for a day's fishing.

"It's a poem," sobbed Old Halibut—"a sad, seamy, sorrowful, satisfactory poem."

"Read it up," said the Conger.

Old Halibut gulped down a sob, wiped the tears off

his glasses with his fin, and started to read in a humpy voice:

THE LAY OF THE LAST LIMPET

Oh, the pale periwinkle has gone on the spree,
And the whelk and the cockle as well,
They have trotted on shore to take afternoon tea
With the hermit crab down at "The Shell."
And whilst they are smirkin' and smilin' and stuffin'
Their little insides full of seed-cake and muffin,
I stick by the edge of the water and moan
For my shell-fish companions have left me alone.

I am left all alone
On this slimy old stone
With nothing to do but to sniff the ozone.
And here I make moan
And with sorrow I groan,
Which is foolish I own,
But all my companions have left me alone.
Whilst they crumpet and shrimp it
They leave me to skimp it,
A lonely old limpet
Alone !

"Don't!" said the Conger, weeping wildly. "Don't!
It's too heart-rending."

"It is a bit tearful," said Old Man Halibut cheerfully,
for he was rather proud of the damp snuffly way in which
he had read the poem.

"Who wrote it?" asked the Conger, drying his eyes.

"It is signed X. Austin," said the Halibut.

"It is! It is!" said the Conger.

"Why don't you two men go fishing, instead of sitting
sobbing there like a couple of grampuses?" cried Old



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Mother Halibut crossly. "There's nothing for lunch but half a jelly-fish and a stale sand-worm."

The Conger looked disappointed and wished he had stayed in Ireland.

"You'll clear off that rock, anyhow," said Mrs. Halibut snappily. "It is spring-cleaning day."

Old Man Halibut rose wearily, folded his newspaper up and put it in his tail pocket. His wife whisked the seaweed off the rock, shook it vigorously, and then began scrubbing the rock with both fins and some dry silver sand.

"She's a wonderful woman," said her Old Man to his friend as they strolled towards the fishing-ground, "and that's a wonderful rock. If it hadn't been made of the best granite it would have been spring-cleaned to nothing long ago."

"I bought a new mud-bank last year, made of the best sewage, from the Belfast Corporation," said the Conger sadly, "and my wife has swept half of it away with tea leaves."

"Too bad," murmured the Old Man Halibut, "but they will do it. I think the exercise is good for them."

And the two tramped along talking mournfully of their home life.

One good thing about living at the bottom of the sea is that there are crowds of sea urchins there who come when you whistle, and have to carry parcels for nothing. The fishermen had picked out several strong urchins to carry their lines and bait, and they were soon busy unpacking them on the fishing-ground.

The fishing-ground was a long sand-bank of yellow sand

in fairly deep water, and was several miles in extent. The fishing was done this way: You tied the bait to big corks —Old Man Halibut used pound lumps of Everton toffee with the silver paper taken off; the Conger used cricket bats, but they were cheap ones. The corks, which were attached to long lines, floated up to the surface, and the other ends of the lines were tied to stones to keep them from being washed away by the current, which ran very swiftly here. They set between twenty and thirty lines and then rested on the sand-bank, staring upward, waiting for a bite.

"I tell you when I first bought this fishing in the days of the Early Britons it was splendid," said Old Man Halibut.

"That was before my time," said the Conger humbly.

"Nearly every boy in the world went to Pappa Westray's school then, and they went in coracles."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Conger. "That was good business."

"But you had to get up jolly early to catch them," continued the Halibut.

"Why?" asked the Conger.

"Didn't I tell you they were Early Britons," said the Old Man crossly. "I wish you would listen."

"How many did you catch in a day?" asked the Conger, who thought it wise to change the subject.

"Half a dozen," said the Halibut.

"You don't say so!" cried the Conger in surprise.

"But I do say so!" shouted the Halibut angrily.

"I didn't say you didn't say so, I said you don't say so," murmured the poor Conger.



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"But I do say so and you know I said so, and you said I didn't say so when you knew I did say so."

"Hush!" cried the Conger. "What is that?"

The shadow of Gamble Gold's canoe passed across the south end of the fishing-ground, and the Halibut and the Conger forgot their quarrel and sat breathless with excitement, staring through the water.

"It's a seal," whispered the Conger.

"It's a Boy," replied the Halibut in ecstasy—"the first I've seen for forty years. Don't get excited. Catch hold of the lines."

The Zephyrs were blowing for all they were worth, thinking of dew-drops in pound tins and rainbow blouses. If they could get Gamble's canoe past the Half-way Halibut's fishing-ground, all would be well.

The first thing Gamble Gold noticed was a cricket bat floating about in the water. He reached at it with his paddle and got it to the side of the canoe. He was just lifting it in when it was suddenly jerked out of his grasp and disappeared.

"Duffer!" shouted Old Man Halibut.

The Conger hung his head and muttered, "Hard lines!"

"The lines are all right, it's the bait," grumbled the Halibut.

The Zephyrs nudged each other's elbows, chuckled with delight, and blew like trumpeters.

In a minute or two the canoe passed through a lot of big lumps floating about among the waves.

"Halloo, Budge, what are these things? Toffee in lumps, Budge, old man," shouted Gamble with joy. "We must save this whatever we do—it might get spoilt."

Budge barked aloud. The Zephyrs blew like blazes and Gamble had to swing the canoe round with the paddle and make a tack to reach the place where the lumps of toffee were bobbing about on the tide. Old Halibut, with all the lines in his fin, was running along the sand-bank to keep the toffee near the canoe.

Gamble got hold of one lump, but, like the Conger, Old Man Halibut was too impatient, and gave it a tug, and Gamble dropped it.

"I call that fishing," sneered the Conger.

"You wait a moment," cried the Halibut.

Gamble had now to get the better of the Zephyrs so he ran his canoe into the wind and let the sails flap, and then he was able to catch another lump of toffee. He seized hold of it with both hands and took a big bite. The Zephyrs groaned. His teeth closed fast into the delicious bait. Then there was a twitch of a line, a jerk that nearly pulled all Gamble's little pearly teeth out, and before he knew where he was, he was being hauled through the water at the rate of a thousand miles an hour. Budge bravely jumped overboard to try and save Gamble, and went swimming about until he saw a lump of toffee under him now, which he seized in his excitement. The Conger was at the end of the line, and poor Budge was soon flapping on the sand-bank by his master.

"What have you got there?" cried out Old Man Halibut.

"It looks like a dog-fish in a fur coat," said the Conger.

The Zephyrs, poor things, were so disappointed that they burst into tears and cried themselves to sleep in



"HE'S SWALLOWED IT."



soft mist on the friendly shoulder of an old heather-coated mountain.

"Take the bait out of his mouth," said Old Man Halibut, as he reeled up his lines. "Never waste bait."

The Conger leaned over Gamble to do as he was told.

"He's swallowed it!" shouted the Conger, in amazement.

"What, a whole pound? Nonsense!" cried the Old Man, running up to look for himself.

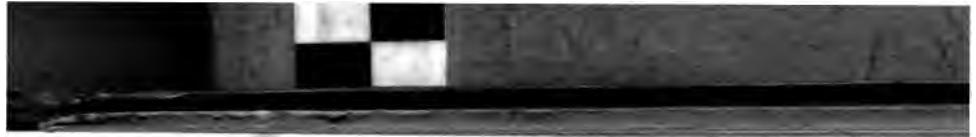
"Honour bright; it's gone," repeated the astonished Conger.

"So it has," said Old Man Halibut. "Then I tell you what—this Boy is an Early Briton. They swallow anything and everything."

"Tell him one of your fishing stories, then," said the Conger meaningly.

Old Man Halibut was too pleased with his catch to be angry. "There's no doubt about it, he's an Early Briton," he continued, "small but early, and if they are coming this way again, this fishing will be looking up, and I shall let it next year and go motoring round the moon."

The Conger looked at him with envy but said nothing, and then they bundled Gamble and Budge into a water-proof sack, and, picking up their tackle, walked proudly home to tell Mrs. Halibut what a glorious day's fishing they had had.



VIII

'The Halibuts' Dinner-Party





CHAPTER VIII

THE HALIBUTS' DINNER-PARTY



MRS. HALIBUT sat in her drawing-room, which was on the south side of the rock, and looked over a pleasant lake round which grew a small forest of seaweed. She was plaiting shrimps' whiskers together to make little hats for her sea-anemones, who suffered from headache when the tide was low and the sun was hot. It was already past lunch-time.

"The Old Man will never catch anything," she said to herself, as she picked some shrimps out of the lake, and pulled their whiskers off, and put them tenderly back. "His fishing days are over, and as for the Conger, he's only fit for soup. Halloo, here they come."

Old Man Halibut was pushing his way through the seaweed forest followed by the Conger carrying the sack.

As soon as they were in sight of home, the Old Man took the sack from the Conger, who declared he wasn't a bit tired. The fact is, they both wanted to show Mother Halibut the catch.

"Any rags, any bones, any bottles to-day?" sang out Mrs. Halibut to tease them.

"You wait a minute and see for yourself," cried out Old Halibut, as he came panting across the green seaweed lawn.

"It looks heavy," said Mrs. Halibut. "What is it? Not torpedoes again? You remember the last one you brought home? I cooked it for three weeks, and it never got soft. A dog-fish couldn't eat one."

Old Halibut threw the sack on the ground.

"Who says the fishing is no good?" he asked proudly.

"You don't mean to say you've caught a Boy?" his wife cried, seeing by his manner that something exciting had happened.

"Not only a Boy, but an Early Briton," said Old Man Halibut.

"Nonsense!" cried his wife, putting down her fancy work, and flipping across the sand to where the sack was lying.

The three stood round the sack, and the Old Man opened the mouth of it, so that they could peer in.

"My word!" cried his excited wife, "it really is a Boy, and rather a fine one, too."

"Ate a whole pound of bait, and tugged like a whale," said her husband.

"You've done jolly well," said his good wife, and she kissed him tenderly on the gills. "What's the other thing?"



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"I caught that," said the Conger.

"With one of my lines, though," said the Halibut.

"What is it?" asked his wife.

"Bow-wow, I believe," remarked the Conger.

"What's a Bow-wow?" said Mrs. Halibut, looking curiously at Budge.

"A kind of land dog-fish," said the Conger; "it follows Boy about—you often see them together on the shore."

"Well, you have had a day," said Mrs. Halibut.
"Come and put them in the tank."

"Aren't you going to cook them for lunch?" asked Old Man Halibut anxiously.

"It's long past lunch-time," replied his wife. "Besides, we can't waste them like that. We haven't had as much food in the house for the last fifty years. Now we can give a dinner-party."

Old Man Halibut groaned. He didn't like dinner-parties, for he had to wear his blue coat with brass buttons, which was rather tight for him, and a stiff collar which scrubbed the scales off his neck and made him fractious.

The Conger looked rather sad about it, too, but he thought they could not very well avoid asking him, and then he would meet The Salmons, and The Brills, and a lot of fish that moved in a circle much above his own. He was a bit of a snob, was the Conger, and he thought it would be worth while remaining hungry for a few hours for the pleasure of going to a dinner-party.

Gamble Gold and Budge were put into the tank. It was a fresh-air tank, made of wood, with some dry straw at the bottom. One side of it was glass, so that you could look in and see the catch. They soon revived, and found

it not at all uncomfortable. They had come through the water so quickly, and been popped into the sack—which was waterproof—at once, so that they were both fairly dry, and when Old Man Halibut threw a pound of bait into the straw, they settled down quite happily in their new quarters to munch the toffee and await events.

Old Man Halibut and the Conger divided the remains of the jelly-fish—the sand-worm was too stale for anything—whilst Mrs. Halibut set to work to arrange the party.

"Who shall we have, my dear?" she asked.

"You decide," said the Old Man, with his mouth full, and one eye on the Conger, who was eating very greedily.

"I don't see why we shouldn't ask the Prince and Princess of Whales."

"Draw it mild, old woman," said the Halibut.

"No harm in asking," said Mrs. Halibut.

"I think you are quite right, madam," said the Conger, who thrilled with excitement at the idea of meeting such great people.

"I generally am right," said Mrs. Halibut coldly, gazing over the top of the Conger's head, and the Conger felt flabby and wished he had said nothing. "Then we must have the Salmons."

"They are up at their country house at the head of the loch. They always go up there in the summer," said the Old Man.

"They will come down for a dinner-party," replied his wife. "The Salmons," she continued, counting them off on the tips of her fins, "the Porpoises, Old John Dory."

"Rather! He's got some rare stories," chuckled Old Man Halibut.



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"The Haddocks, the Soles."

"Not the Lemon Soles," said her husband hastily.

"Of course not, dear. The Carnarvon Bay Soles, the plumper branch of the family, of course. You'll be expecting me to ask the Plaices next. Let me see, the Herrings and the Mackerels are away on their holidays at Yarmouth. Who else is there? Oh, the Codfishes! We must ask them, for we dined with them in the autumn, but Mr. Codfish is terribly coarse."

"His wife has beautiful eyes, though," murmured Old Halibut sentimentally.

"Sings well too," said the Conger.

"Then you must ask Lord and Lady Turbot," said Old Man Halibut carelessly.

The Conger tried to look as though he had known them all his life, but no one believed him. Whatever you are, do not be a snob.

"And Admiral Brill and his daughter," said Mrs. Halibut, "and Bishop Hake and his wife. That makes the party complete."

"You've forgotten our friend the Conger here," said the Old Man.

Mrs. Halibut looked furious, but all she said was, "Delighted, I'm sure. I hope you brought your dress suit with you."

The Conger sank to the ground and sobbed with disappointment. He had not brought his dress suit—in fact, he had not got one.

"You should always bring a dress suit with you," said Old Halibut, "when you come to these parts. However, when is the party to be, missis?"

"To-morrow night, of course."

"Then you'll have lots of time to run over to Ireland and get it," said the Old Man.

The Conger jumped up and thanked them heartily. An old uncle of his in Cork had a dress suit and he would go and borrow it. There was plenty of time. With a whisk of his tail, he was half a mile down the road in two seconds.

"I expect he'll be in time," said Old Man Halibut.

"I'll take care he won't," said his wife. "Fancy asking the Princess to meet a Conger. We'll have the dinner party to-night."

"It's hardly fair, you know," said the Old Man, "he caught the Bow-wow."

"Oh, we'll save him a bit of Bow-wow and tell him the Prince and Princess couldn't come any other night," replied his wife. "Now you

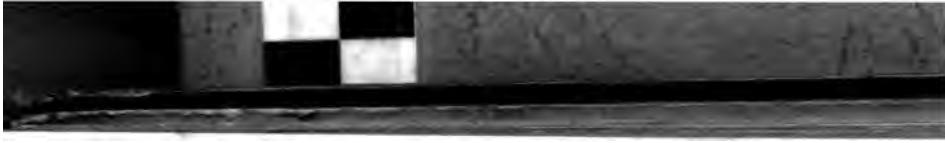
be off to sleep and don't worry me, for I've a lot to do. Dinner will be at half-past seven, and mind you are in your blue coat by seven."

"Must I put a collar on?" asked Old Man Halibut sadly.

"Of course you must, and a white tie too, and mind you scrub your fins with a nail-brush before you come down."



SALI.Y.



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The Old Man Halibut toddled away to get a nap and his wife set about preparing for her dinner-party. She rang for Sally, her maid—she only kept one servant—to discuss the bill of fare, and sat down to write her invitations on oyster-shells. Sally, a pert little mermaid with a white seaweed cap and apron, was delighted to hear there was to be a dinner-party, and went out to whistle for a flying-fish to take round the letters of invitation. When they were sent off, she returned to her mistress, who was deep in the mysteries of the cookery book.

"I really don't know what to do," said Mrs. Halibut, shutting up the book, "there are so many ways of cooking boys, but at the end of each recipe it always says, 'Boys, however carefully cooked, do not always turn out as well as they ought to do.'"

"Why not send for the Swiss Seal, and let him do the cooking?" suggested Sally.

"An excellent notion," said Mrs. Halibut; "you run round and tell him to hurry up whilst I set out the table."

The table was a round flat rock. A sail was spread out on the top of it and there were piles of big shell plates for the different courses. The Swiss Seal came hurrying along in a flat white paper cap and a big apron, looking for all the world like a real man cook. Cooking down under the sea is always troublesome. It is very difficult to light a fire for one thing, and the gridirons get rusty. All the rich fish, such as the Salmons and the Turbots, have their food cooked upstairs on the rocks, and brought down. That is why the Seals are such good cooks, for they can go on to the rocks, cook the food, and bring it down.

The Swiss Seal was a very good cook indeed, and also a bit of a mystery. He said he came from Switzerland, but he spoke with a north-country accent. Old Man Halibut, who had travelled a good deal, said he had been all round Europe from the North Cape to the Black Sea, and there was no such place as Switzerland at all. On the other hand, at the bottom of the sea he had found a tin of Swiss milk, which looked as though it had come from somewhere. So he remained puzzled. The Swiss Seal talked a lot of his mountain home and said "Parley voo," and "Sivoo play," which he declared was the language of the country. The fact is, he had been in Switzerland with his brother, for they had both been performing seals, and on a journey from Calais to Dover he had fallen overboard. He wandered about for a time, and then settled down near the Halibuts, and made his living by going out cooking. He was very happy except when he thought of his long-lost brother. Then he wept.

"This is going to be a very important party, I can see," he said to Mrs. Halibut, as he looked through the window of the tank. "Parley voo!"

"What did you say, sir?" said Mrs. Halibut, rather ashamed not to understand him.

"Sorry!" said the Swiss Seal. "I must get out of that silly habit of thinking aloud in French. What I meant to say was that, of course, you begin the feast with limpets and cockles. Hand them round on rudders decorated with pink seaweed, sivoo play—I beg your pardon, it's living so long in Switzerland does it. The soup should be thick mud-bank, and clear tadpole. I can get you those up the river. Be sure and strain the tadpoles out through



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a sieve, and serve hot. Then the usual wait of ten minutes."

Under the sea it is not thought nice at dinner-parties to have fish on the table, though they are freely eaten when you meet them out on a walk. So there is always a wait of ten minutes, and then you go on to the joints.

"Now," said the Swiss Seal, "let's have a look at the joints. The Dog looks tough, and I shouldn't wonder if the Boy is a pickle."

"I hope not," said Mrs. Halibut anxiously.

"It's no use hoping about Boys," said the Swiss Seal; "if he's a pickle, he's a pickle. Then he must be boiled with carrots and turnips. I should roast the Dog or make him into sausages."

"Why not a pie?" suggested Mrs. Halibut.

"Good!" cried the Seal. "Boy and Dog pie. Excellent! Now, Sally, you catch hold of one end of the tank, and I will catch hold of the other, and let us be off to build a fire on the rocks."

"Half-past seven o'clock dinner, remember," shouted Mrs. Halibut, as they rose to the surface.

It was a warm sunny evening, the little waves were lapping lazily against the rocks as the Swiss Seal and Sally hauled the tank out of the water. Gamble and Budge were fast asleep in the straw, and did not wake up when the Seal opened the lid to have a look at them.

"It seems a pity to cook them, doesn't it?" he said with a sigh. "Pooh! The fact is I have too soft a heart."

"Did you say heart or head?" asked Sally innocently.

She was sitting on a rock with her tail in the water, and had taken her cap off and let her hair down, so that

she could comb it, and gaze at it in the little hand glass which she always carried about with her. Sally was a vain little mermaid, and was always losing her hair ribbons.

" You leave your hair alone and come and gather wood —sivoo play," said the Seal grumpily.

" Sivoo shan't play," said Sally saucily.

The Seal went grumbling lumpily over the rocks, picking out bits of wood to make the fire.

" If you won't work, why don't you sing ? " he asked.

Sally put down her comb and picked up a large whelk-shell on which she blew several sweet-sounding notes.

" Not that," shouted the Seal ; " that's 'The Halibut's Horn-pipe.' Let us have 'The Fisherman on Toast.' "

" It's rather sad ! " said the mermaid, looking mournfully at Gamble and Budge.

" It's the rule to sing it when the fire is lighted," said the Swiss Seal gravely. " Besides, the chorus will wake them up, and then we can get at the straw to put on the fire."

Little Sally played a merry air upon the whelk-shell and Gamble sat up in the tank and rubbed his eyes! Budge barked in his sleep.

" Holloa ! " cried Gamble, " what is all this about ? "

" Hush ! " whispered the Swiss Seal, pointing to Sally. " She is going to sing. I work for my supper, but she sings for hers."

" And where is the supper ? " asked Gamble.

" Ho, ho ! " laughed the Seal, " that's jolly good. Where's the supper ? I say, Sally, where is the supper ? Ha, ha ha ! " He rolled over and over in the seaweed, shouting with laughter.

Gamble Gold climbed out of the straw and sat on the



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edge of the tank, munching the last bit of toffee. "I don't see the joke," he said, laughing at the Seal's antics ; "where is the supper ?"

"Don't !" said the Seal, "I can't laugh any more. Don't !" and he lay back in a rock pool, with his head on the seaweed, quite exhausted.

"Get up, you silly," said little Sally, "and stop laughing, or you will have no breath for the chorus."

The dear little mermaid played a beautiful air on her shell and Gamble found himself beating time with his foot to the tune, which was very taking. So thought all the dwellers among the rocks, for the prawns came out and sat in rows on the seaweed, the oysters opened their mouths wide to listen, little shrimps clambered in great crowds on to the rocks, sea anenomes sat proudly in the stalls in their best bibs and tuckers, and every shell-fish put his head out to hear the song. It was a great day for them, for when little Sally sang, you generally had to pay to come in. It was a glorious song, and every one joined in the chorus, which was of course the best fun. Gamble Gold from the edge of the tank beat time, and every one sang as loud as he could. Budge woke up and barked twice to each bar, and howled at the end of every line, and even the old cliffs echoed it back again. That was a chorus ! Sally was delighted with it and sang each verse more beautifully than the last.

THE FISHERMAN ON TOAST

I

The Sardine was lurking behind in the tin
To smooth his young whiskers in oil,
Whilst his sister was fanning the flames with her fin
In hopes that the kettle would boil.

Gamble Gold

The Shrimp and the Pilchard had changed a bank-note
 To pay the old Salmon his debt,
 When the black-hearted fisherman came in his boat
 And scooped up the lot in his net.

Chorus

So ho ! So ho !
 The breezes blow,
 The fisherman's gone to sea.
 But if he comes back
 On a starboard tack
 When the tide is slack
 Without his smack
 We'll all have shrimps for tea.

II

The callow young Bloater was darning a frill,
 The Gurnet was trolling for grouse,
 The Lobster was mildly dissuading the Brill
 From the folly of building a house.
 The Mackerel was tossing about in his bed
 And dreaming of parsley and cooks,
 And the black-hearted fisherman smiled as he said,
 "I can catch all these fellows on hooks."

Chorus

So ho ! So ho !
 The breezes blow,
 The fisherman's gone to sea.
 But if he comes back
 On a starboard tack
 When the tide is slack
 Without his smack
 We'll all have shrimps for tea.

III

A Storm Cloud the size of an extra large bat
 Came walloping out of the west,
 He was thick as a waterproof, black as a hat,
 And he hugged the cold hail to his breast.



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He burst o'er the black-hearted fisherman's head
When he caught him five miles from the coast,
Then the kind-hearted cloud as he got into bed
Rejoiced that those dear little fishes were fed
On fisherman served up on toast.

Chorus

So ho! So ho!
The breezes blow,
The fisherman's gone to sea.
But if he comes back
On a starboard tack
When the tide is slack
Without his smack
We'll all have shrimps for tea.

"Now that is really quite a good song," said Gamble Gold, when the last echo of the fourteenth chorus had died away.

Sally blushed and looked very pleased.

"I heard the tune once," continued Gamble, "many years ago. It was played by a band."

"On a pier?" asked the Seal.

"I don't think it was a pier," said Gamble. "It came up our valley and put up a large round tent and there was a Seal in it—just like you, sir. And performing dogs, and it was called——"

"Not a circus?" cried the Seal, jumping up.

"That's the word," shouted Gamble, "a circus! Granny took me; we stayed to the end and saw everything. There was a performing Seal——"

"Two Seals," cried the Swiss Seal in great excitement.

"One balanced a ball on the end of his nose," said Gamble.

"The other couldn't," groaned the Seal.

"He never tried," said Gamble. "How do you know he couldn't?"

"I am that Seal," said the Swiss cook, dropping his head.

"What! the fellow who sat in the chair with the tambourine and looked so foolish?" Gamble chuckled at the recollection.

"Yes!" sighed the Swiss Seal, "the clever one was my younger brother, but he had been at Iceland University."

"Never mind," said Gamble, in a kindly way. "I thought you were much funnier because you didn't know what to do with the tambourine. You made me laugh just like you did about the supper."

"Thank you," said the Seal gravely, "no doubt I was meant to play funny parts, but I always liked tragedy best. Did you ever see me in Hamlet?"

Gamble shook his head.

"Then you shall," said the Seal, looking very pleased, "and Sally shall do Ophelia. Do you think Budge could do the King and the Grave-digger and the other parts?"

Sally looked up from making the fire, which was now burning and crackling merrily, and called out: "Now then, Cook, bring along the dinner, and let us hurry up."

"The dinner?" said Gamble. "I thought it was supper."

"It is really supper," said the Seal, "but late dinner sounds grander."

"Bring it along," shouted Sally.

"Impossible," said the Seal.

"What do you mean?" asked Sally.

"It's the audience," said the Seal, making a profound



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bow to Gamble—"my audience, and I'm going to act Hamlet to it. If you are good you shall play Ophelia."

"And what's going to become of the dinner?" asked Sally in distress.

"That I don't know," said the Seal, "but no one is going to eat my audience until it has seen me play Hamlet."

"How long does Hamlet take?" asked Sally.

"Days and days, the way I do it," replied the Seal.

"Well, we will cook the Dog then," said Sally. "And tell them the Boy turned out a pickle."

"Certainly," said the Seal. He moved towards Budge, who curled up his top lip, showed two rows of white teeth, and growled under his breath. The Seal stopped. "You fetch the dog, Sally. I don't think he likes me." The Seal was trembling all over.

"No one touches Budge," said Gamble, putting his arm lovingly round his neck. "Love me, love my dog."

"He is right again," said the Seal. "That is the rule." And he went up and patted Budge with his flipper.

Sally whistled him to her, and stroked him gently, and Budge wagged his tail to explain that he understood all they meant.

"But what about the party?" said Sally, looking at the dying fire.

"They must eat each other if they are hungry," said the Seal.

"But I shall get into a terrible row," said poor little Sally, whimpering, "and Mrs. Halibut will slap me and twist my tail, and declare I've eaten the Boy myself."

"I tell you what we will do," said the Seal, after a moment's thought. "We will not go back at all. We

will go with these"—pointing to Budge and Gamble—"and I can do the cooking and act Hamlet, and you can be the housemaid and act Ophelia. You haven't got a housemaid on board the canoe, have you?"

"No," cried Gamble, who was rather puzzled.

"Come along, then," cried the Seal.

He waddled round the headland followed by Budge and Gamble. Sally plunged into the sea and swam round to meet them. On the sandy shore was *The Pick-a-back* lying on the beach ready to start.

"I'm afraid there isn't room for all of us," said Gamble, looking doubtfully at Sally and the Seal.

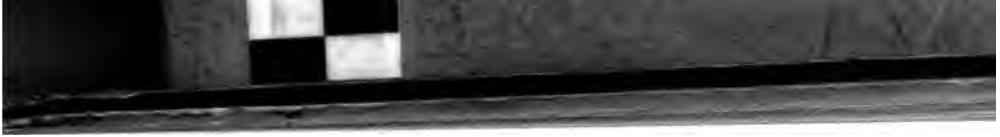
"Jump in and let's hurry," cried the Seal. "It's nearly Old Halibut's dinner-time."

Gamble and Budge ran the canoe down to the edge of the shore, and pushed off among the little waves. The Seal waded out after them, and as they got into deep water, swam behind them, and now and then butted the stern of the canoe with his head, to push it along. As for Sally, she caught hold of the painter, and swimming in front of the canoe, laughingly dragged it through the waves.

A mile from shore they met a white whale rolling along at a great pace.

"I'm afraid I'm late for dinner," he shouted, "but I was preparing my speech."

"The Prince is a capital fellow," said the Seal to Gamble, as the whale disappeared. "But far too fond of spouting. I wish you could have met him at dinner for his sake. He would have liked you, I am sure. Hark! do you hear that?"

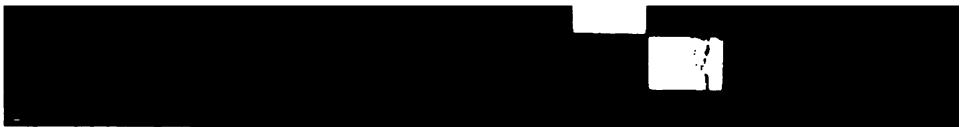


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Gamble Gold stood up in the canoe with his little hand to his ear, and heard the sweet sound of a dinner-bell stealing across the calm sea.

"It sounds like a dinner-bell to me," he said.

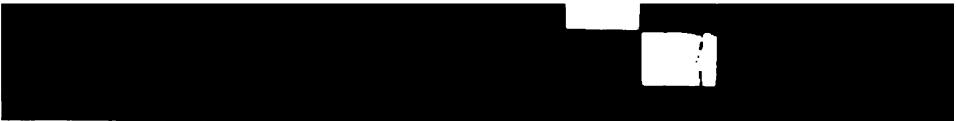
"Ha, ha!" laughed the Seal. "It isn't often that the dinner hears the dinner-bell, is it? Ha, ha!"





IX

Pappa Westray



CHAPTER IX

PAPPA WESTRAY



NORSE.

IT was the first day of the new term, and the boys were coming back. Pappa Westray sat on the edge of a long white marble pier gazing out to sea. He was a fine old man —tall, broad-chested—and in his chest, when he unlocked it, there was a big heart. Pappa Westray had need of a big heart, for he loved small boys, and for its size a small boy is the most difficult thing to

love wisely that I know of. But then Pappa Westray was a schoolmaster, and schoolmasters, next to mothers, are the most wonderful people in the world, and are always, or nearly always, right, whatever they do or say.

And though Pappa Westray was a schoolmaster and had been a schoolmaster for many thousands of years, he was not a dry, harsh man like some of the old-fashioned fellows I have read of. On the contrary, a merry face was framed in that stubbly iron-grey beard of his. Bright brown eyes shot rays of love and laughter from beneath his bushy black eyebrows, and his bottle nose, ruddy and weather-beaten, glowed with good-fellowship.

It had been a stormy day, and as he stood there in his oilskins and big top-boots, you might have taken him for an old fisherman smoking his evening pipe upon the pier. He picked up a big speaking-horn and shouted across to the Old Man of Hoy, a genial boy giant who sat on the top of the mountain-cliffs of a neighbouring island four or five miles away.

"Do you see anything in the offing, Hoy, old man?"

The giant put his hand to his mouth and shouted back : "Surf and sea-gulls—nothing else."

"Just wade out a few miles and have a look round," shouted Pappa Westray.

The Old Man of Hoy slid down the mountain-cliffs on the back of his trousers, and waded away into the sea without taking off his shoes and stockings.

"I hope he will remember to change his stockings when he comes in, otherwise he will catch cold," said a voice at Pappa Westray's elbow.

It was Granny. She had come down from the school-house with a mackintosh, an umbrella, and pattens on her feet. Her dress was pinned up with sixteen safety-pins, and she was rather anxious about her pretty red petticoat for fear that might get wet if it rained again.

"I'll see he changes his things, Jemima," said Pappa Westray. "Don't you worry."

"Oh, I like worrying," said Granny, laughing. "If I had nothing to worry about I should cry."

"Well, you'll have lots to worry about, and I'm very glad you've come back again. The school hasn't been the same thing at all since you went away."

Now, to understand how Granny came to be at Pappa Westray's school and why he called her Jemima, I must tell you very shortly Granny's real history. When Pappa Westray started a school many thousands of years ago, he knew he must have a thoroughly good matron—not only a lady who was good at buttons and clothes, but a real kind soul who would listen to mothers without weariness for hours together, and would look as though she really believed when she was talking to a mother that the new boy they were discussing was better and brighter and more beautiful than any new boy she had ever heard of. There were a lot of answers to Pappa Westray's advertisement, of course. His final choice lay between a Spartan step-mother, who had got out of step with her husband, and Granny, whose real name was Jemima Æsop. The Spartan lady was too grim for Pappa Westray's fancy, so Jemima got the place, and lived at the school for many hundred years until she went to look after Gamble Gold.

The boys always called her the Norse, or Jemima of the Fitful Foot, because on those rare occasions when she did put her foot down, the earth quaked and the tide rose and beetles fled for their lives. But this very seldom happened, for, as we know, she was a sweet, gracious old

lady, and loved boys better than boys love bulls'-eyes, and she let them tease her and play all sorts of pranks with her, and her great reward was that when any of them were ill or in trouble, they always ran to their dear Norse for comfort, for they really loved her as much as she loved them, though they made no end of fun of her when they were well and mischievous.

The story of how she left the school is rather a sad one, but as it has a moral to it for all of us, I will tell it to you. The fact is, she once lost her temper and had to go away and get a new one made. I do not think she can be greatly blamed for losing it, for it was scarcely her fault, but this is how it happened. There was at that time at Pappa Westray's school a little boy called Alfred. There was no harm in Alfred, but he was a prig and rather an impudent fellow too, as you shall hear. One evening dear old Norse—we must not call her Granny any more —was telling the boys stories round the log fire in the great hall. Alfred knew very well indeed all the trouble Jemima *Æsop* had had in the old days with her little brother. Every one knows that story now, I suppose : how that wicked fellow had stolen his sister Jemima's beautiful fables and printed them as his own. It is a wicked thing to steal any one else's book and call it your own, and it does not mend matters to make a mess of the stolen stories and tell them all the wrong way up as *Æsop* did. Jemima was proud of her own fables, as well she might be, and it was horrid of her little brother to go and steal them.

"What fable shall we have to-night, boys ?" said the Norse, picking out half a dozen stockings from a basket and proceeding to darn them.

"The Fox and the Crow," shouted several lads. They knew them by heart, but they liked them all the better for that.

Then Norse began as follows :

THE FOX AND THE CROW

A hung-ry Fox was trav-el-ling
round the world with a bass voice



and a pi-an-o or-gan. Walk-ing a-long the Ox-ford Road, he saw a Crow sit-ting on a lamp-post, with a big piece of old and grist-ly A-mer-i-can cheese in his beak. The Fox knew that the Crow loved mu-sic, and that

his doc-tor would not let him eat cheese, so he struck up Ka-ka-wow-ski's So-na-ta in H mi-nor on the pi-an-o or-gan. At this the Crow shook his head and wept, but did not o-pen his beak. Then the wi-ly Fox lift-ed up his voice and sang "Rule Bri-tan-ni-a." Be-fore he had half fin-ished, the Crow perched on the ground near the or-gan and said, "I have been fly-ing a-bout for miles and miles with this piece of cheese; eat it quick-ly be-fore it goes any far-ther." Then he flew a-way, and the proud Fox end-ed his song and found him-self all a-lone. E-ven the cheese could not stand his mu-sic, and had set off to walk home to A-mer-i-ca.

Moral.—En-cour-age home in-dus-tries.

"I say, Norse," called out Alfred, as the other boys were thanking her. "That's a jolly crib."

"Is it?" said Norse quietly, without looking up from her darning.

"I've read that in a book."

"You should attend to your cricket lessons and not read books," said Norse.

"It was in the holidays," continued Alfred.

"Be quiet," cried Norse, turning rather pale.

"You'd better own up, Norse," said Alfred, in a teasing spirit; "you've cribbed it out of a book and got it all wrong. I'll tell you how it goes."

He began to recite in a mocking tone.

THE FOX AND THE CROW

The Fox and the Crow
In prose I well know
Many good little boys can rehearse.
Perhaps it will tell
Pretty nearly as well
If I try the same fable in verse.

"In verse, indeed!" cried the Norse indignantly.

And at that moment the rays of a blue moon shone in at the window. Jemima of the Fitful Foot put it down, the house shook, and she chased Alfred round the room, having thoroughly lost her temper and intending to give Master Alfred the spanking he so thoroughly deserved.

Luckily for him Pappa Westray heard the din. He was in his study writing that beautiful poem, "The Burden of Butter-fingers." You remember how when that was published, his old pupil, the King of Australia, presented him with the gold cross of the Woolpack and made him Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Kangaroo. He put down his grey goose-quill pen—the one he wrote poetry with—and listened. There was no doubt there was a disturbance. The floors creaked, the windows rattled, and soot came down the chimney. It was clear to Pappa Westray that something was up. He rushed down from his study just in time to save naughty Alfred from the second spank. I am really glad he didn't arrive earlier. When he heard from the other boys how naughty he had been he was sorry he had hurried, but Alfred wasn't,

I can tell you. Pappa Westray's first thought was for poor Norse. She was in terrible distress. It was clear that she had lost her temper. They put her to bed, and every man, boy, and child in the school turned out with lanterns to hunt for it.

The blue moon shone above them. Pappa Westray started when he saw it. "I remember now," he said to himself. "She foresaw this would happen. What a wonderful woman she is! I asked her when she came if she ever lost her temper, and she said, 'Yes, once in a blue moon.' Now it has come true. This is the once. We shall never find it."

And they never did. They hunted all night. Temper beagles were put on the track and went snuffing around. Pappa Westray with a five-horse power night-light in his old stable lantern searched the moors, and went into every cave on the shore, and groped among the seaweed, and dragged the ocean, and inquired carefully of every moth and owl and bat that he met, but all to no purpose. And, when they were tired out, the sun rose, the blue moon sank behind the hills of Hoy, and they were face to face with the terrible truth that the Norse they loved so well had really lost her temper.

The next morning Pappa Westray took her in the balloon to Krab's cave, where the tempers are made, and he made her a very special sort of temper indeed, more sweet and beautiful than any I have ever met with. This took some time in the making and fixing, and when it was done Jemima Æsop could not make up her mind to go back to the school just at first, so she started being a Granny, which is not so trying to the temper as acting as Norse to

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a lot of young kings at a big school. That is how she came to look after Gamble Gold in far Glen Guile, and now you understand why Pappa Westray was glad to see her back again. A school without a Norse is no good at all.

As for Alfred he left soon afterwards to rule England, which was about all he was fit for. He was very sorry for the mischief he had done, but he was a careless lad, and the only thing of note he did whilst he was a king was to burn some excellent buns that he had promised to look after in the oven. In later years he did better and called himself Alfred the Great. Then when English mothers came to look at Pappa Westray's school they used to say : "I think that Alfred the Great was educated here?" and Pappa Westray said, "The dear child was one of my favourite pupils." Then the mothers said, "How interesting ! His uncle's cousin was my mother's brother." Then Pappa Westray used to say, "Then your little boys will feel quite at home here." A schoolmaster has to do this kind of thing for the good of the school.

But to return to Pappa Westray and Granny—or I should say Norse—at the end of the pier. It had been rather a rough day and the pupils were undoubtedly late in returning.

"Isn't that the Old Man of Hoy coming back ?" cried Norse, pointing to a speck in the ocean.

Pappa Westray put his telescope to his eye and said : "Here he comes, and he'll soon be able to tell us if they are in sight."

The Boy Giant came striding along. "They are just round Cape Wrath," he shouted. "Crowds of them. Iron-clads, motor-boats, schooners, cutters and all sorts."

Norse clapped her hands. "Bless them all," she whispered to herself. "Buttons and boys, buttons and boys, I love them."

The Boy Giant clambered up to his cliff.

"Tell him to change his stockings, Pappa," asked Norse.

"I bet he'll remember," said Pappa Westray.

"I wish you wouldn't bet," said Norse, "it's a bad example for the boys."

"But I only bet with myself, and I never pay, you know," said Pappa Westray.

"That's better, but still it's betting," said Norse. "If you must bet about a boy you should bet he won't remember, if you want to win."

Pappa Westray caught hold of his speaking-trumpet and shouted his orders to the Boy Giant, who, as Norse had foreseen, had not remembered, but off he went grumbling inland to his cave to find some dry shoes and stockings.

And now the vessels began to arrive. There were some fine ironclads from some of the greatest navies in the world, for little boys came from all parts to Pappa Westray's school. The harbour was soon crowded with ships of all nations from Patagonia, Greenland, Margate, Heligoland, the Isle of Man, Greece, Germany, and the Great Sahara, and indeed more places than I can remember. It was a pretty sight to see all these little boys in their Sunday clothes, carrying a little hand-bag with their things for the night, say good-bye to their mothers on deck and jump into their little boats, and to see the sailors pulling briskly up to the foot of the pier whilst



THE PUPILS ARRIVE.

the youngsters stood waving to their mothers all the way. Pappa Westray had put on a college cap and gown over his seafaring clothes to greet his pupils, and he stood on the top step and shook hands with each new arrival, saying to him, "I hope we shall do better this term," and each new arrival said "Rather!" as though he meant it.

Norse sat at a table with her pen and inkstand and a big book entering the new arrivals. Each went up and hugged Norse affectionately and found out the number of his room. Then he got some of the goblin porters, of which there were many hundreds belonging to the school, to catch hold of his luggage, and away he went up the hill to the school-house, chattering with some friend about the doings of the holidays and making plans for the new term. As for the poor mothers on the ships, they had to clear out of harbour sharp, for Norse had pinned up a notice on the harbour lightship : "No boat containing any mother, aunt, sister, or granny of any pupil to remain in harbour more than thirty minutes." So off they went.

"What about that new boy you mentioned?" asked Pappa Westray.

"He's very late," said Norse anxiously. "I can't understand it."

"The Iceland princes haven't come yet either," said Pappa Westray.

"The Twins you were telling me about?" said Norse. "I hope nothing has happened to them; they must be the jolliest laddies in the school."

"The old King of Iceland insists upon sending them

in a coble and making them row all the way by themselves," said Pappa Westray, shaking his head. "It isn't safe, but he says it hardens them, and I dare say he's right."

"What's that?" cried Norse, pointing out to sea.

"Ah, that's it, right enough," said Pappa Westray, squinting at it through his telescope.

"But there are three in that boat," said Norse, who had seized the telescope from Pappa Westray and was looking out to sea.

"Only two," said Pappa Westray — "Scappa and Scrabster, and a couple of the biggest pickles in the school."

They stood looking at the coble which shot over the waves and was soon at the pier steps. Scappa, a fair-haired youngster, jumped out, and Scrabster, a red-haired lad, held the boat off with a boat-hook. A little girl, with almost redder hair than her brother, jumped out of the boat and ran up the steps. Her brothers threw out the luggage on to the quay, and rowing their boat into the harbour they fastened her to a buoy. Then they jumped over the side and swam to the pier.

The little girl was already sitting on Norse's knee, feeling quite happy.

"Who is she?" asked Pappa Westray, as the two boys came up the steps dripping and shaking themselves.

"Little Flotta," answered the two boys at once. "We thought she would be so lonely at home, we brought her with us."

"But what would your father say?" said Pappa Westray.

"Father says girls don't count," said the twins.

"Count or not, they can't come here," said Pappa Westray.

Little Flotta looked as though she were going to cry, but Norse said, "Look here, Pappa, Flotta can't go back in the coble by herself, and we can't send the boys back until the end of the term. Why not let her come and stay with me in my little cottage until the holidays?—only," she said turning to the Twins, "it mustn't happen again."

This seemed indeed the only thing to do. So it was settled that it should be done, and Pappa Westray shook hands with the Twins and hoped that they would do better this term and they said "Rather!" at the same moment and in the same voice.

"I say, brothers," said Little Flotta, as they helped the goblins to sort out the luggage, "you've forgotten the mermaid's message."

"Of course!" cried the Twins together. "Out there," they continued, still speaking together, and raising their arms to point out to sea at the same moment, for they did everything in couples, so to speak—"out there we met a mermaid. She was hurrying on here to bring a message. She said her name was Sally, and the new boy couldn't get here until to-morrow as he had been delayed by an adventure."

"What sort of an adventure?" asked Norse anxiously.

"Something about a halibut," said the Twins. "She asked us to tell you, so that she could get back again."

"Halibut!" said Norse, with a toss of her head. "I hate halibuts."

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She wrote out a notice and handed it to Pappa Westray.
"Can I have that pinned on the harbour lightship?"
she asked.

"Certainly," said Pappa Westray, when he had read
it. "We don't want any adventures with halibuts here."

The notice was: "To Cormorants. Halibut fishing
in this harbour is free."





X

Norse



CHAPTER X

NORSE



LITTLE FLOTTA.

THERE were no lessons the first night. At supper-time Little Flotta sat next Norse, and all the boys looked up at her shyly, and wished in their hearts that they had been as bold as Scappa and Scrabster, and brought their little sisters with them. Still, it was against the rules, and Norse had already put up a notice on the big school-room notice board : "The rule is NO SISTERS ! Little Flotta is an exception, and must not happen again." Every one was allowed to laugh and talk as much as

he pleased at meal-times, for this was said by Pappa Westray to be good for digestion, and as he wisely writes in his great book on "Boys and Behaviour :" "Look after the inside and the outside will look after itself."

The Master sat at the end of the table with his speaking-horn, and when supper was nearly over, he shouted out : " Pray silence for the Norse."

At this every one was quiet for a moment, and then shouted out, " A fable ! A fable ! "

Norse shook her head.

" Just one before bedtime," shouted the boys.

" Well, which shall it be ? " asked Norse.

" The Hare and the Tortoise," said Scappa and Scrabster together ; " we tried to tell Flotta—didn't we, Flotta ?—and we got terribly mixed up, didn't we, Flotta ? "

Flotta nodded.

" Very well," said Norse, and she began.

THE HARE AND THE TOR-TOISE

A Tor-toise named Slow-coach went in for a hun-dred yards Tor-toise Race, and won it in ten hours fif-ty-five sec-onds. This was a rec-ord. He was giv-en a Choc-o-late Med-al, which made him so proud that his shell swelled, and he walked a-bout like a crab, side-ways, and made him-self in oth-er ways par-tic-u-lar-ly ri-dic-u-lous. Meet-ing a Hare, he chal-lenged him to race a hun-dred yards.

" What shall we race for ? " asked the Hare.

"Soup," said Slow-coach, with a sneer.

This was un-kind, for no one who loves hares ev-er speaks to them of Soup or Cur-rant Jel-ly.

When the race came off, they in-vi-ted



THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE.

a Lord May-or to be Um-pire, tell-ing him that, what-ever hap-pened, there would cer-tain-ly be soup.

The Lord May-or came ear-ly, and sat at the win-ning post with a kitch-en fire, a sauce-pan, and a soup-plate. The Hare won the race eas-i-ly, and the Lord May-or pat-ted him kind-ly on

**the head, say-ing, “ I am glad you won,
for I pre-fer Tor-toise.”**

Then they went to look for Slow-coach, and found him puff-ing and pant-ing a-bout five yards from the start.

“ Let me car-ry you,” said the Lord May-or, who was a ten-der-heart-ed man, “ for so much ex-er-tion will make you tough.”

Pick-ing up Slow-coach, he car-ried him to the win-ning post and made him into Tor-toise Soup.

Moral.—First catch your May-or, then feed him.

“ I’m rather sorry for Slow-coach,” said Little Flotta.

“ I’m sorry for anybody who swaggers,” said Norse, “ particularly if he has nothing to swagger about.”

“ It doesn’t make it any better if he has,” shouted Pappa Westray from the end of the table.

“ You’re right again, Pappa,” said Norse. “ Let us have some songs. We generally do the first night.”

So they all sang songs—“ John Peel ” and “ Bill Bailey,” and the “ Skye Boat Song,” and any song that any one could remember that had a tune and a chorus—the words didn’t matter.

It was a glorious supper, and just before “ Rule Britannia ” and “ God save the King,” and bedtime, Pappa



THE SONG OF THE NORSE.

Westray sang the Norse's song as he always did on feast-days and holidays. And the way of singing it was thus : Pappa Westray headed a procession, and all the boys followed after in single file, the big ones first, and then the little ones, and on this evening the long string of boys ended with Little Flotta, who was allowed to join the dance at her special request. Then Pappa Westray started the verse and began dancing round the tables, followed by all the school, and when they got to the chorus they sang it over and over again, and each one as he passed Norse's chair stopped and made as graceful a bow as he could. The "Song of the Norse" was written by Alfred the Great when he grew older and wiser, and it had a Saxon tune, and Saxon rhymes, and a Saxon chorus, but Pappa Westray had translated it and it went like this :

SONG OF THE NORSE

I

Oh, Norse! Norse! Norse!
I've lost my right-hand shoe,
And no one knows where I've put it,
 Except the stocking and you.
My collar stud is missing,
 It is hiding under the bed,
But it won't be found, so come and look round
 Or give me another instead.

Chorus

Norse! Norse! Norse!
Tuck me up when I'm in bed,
For mother's away, and I've come to stay
 With dear old Norse instead.

Norse

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II

Oh, Norse! Norse! Norse!
I've burst my braces now
In number six, and I cannot fix
My trousers anyhow.
So Norse! Norse! Norse!
Come here, you dear old thing,
And fasten them in with a safety pin
Or tie them up with string.

Chorus

Sing Norse! Norse! Norse!
Tuck me up when I'm in bed,
For mother's away, and I've come to stay
With dear old Norse instead.

III

Oh, Norse! Norse! Norse!
I've a pain beneath my belt;
I needn't explain, it's the very worst pain
A small boy ever felt.
Oh, Norse! Norse! Norse!
Produce that powder grey;
For they couldn't play cricket unless I kept wicket,
So make it well to-day.

Chorus

And Norse! Norse! Norse!
Tuck me up when I'm in bed,
For mother's away, and I've come to stay
With dear old Norse instead.

The song finished, every one went off to bed. Norse took Little Flotta into her own room in her own cottage, where a beautiful little white and gold cot had been prepared for her, and having seen her comfortably tucked up, went round and tucked up all the boys—there were a hundred and ninety-four there that term—and then

went down and had a chat with Pappa Westray in his study.

Pappa Westray's study was a large room, fitted like a gymnasium with ropes and bars and a vaulting horse. Round the sides were bookcases and pictures. Many of these had been portraits sent by old pupils, and were signed "from your dear little friend, England's Elizabeth," or "your affectionate pupil, Julius Cæsar," or "in memory of happy school-days, from Caractacus." There was a large window opening on to the cricket-ground, and here was a desk at which Pappa Westray wrote those books for which he was famed all over the world. "The Boy at his Best" had the largest circulation, I believe, for every mother bought it and lent it to her dearest friends, saying, "My boy was at that school, and I recognised whom it was meant for at once."

Pappa Westray was swinging round on a horizontal bar when Norse came in.

"It is very strange," she said, "that Gamble Gold has not arrived."

"Not a bit, my dear," said the Master; "nothing is strange about a small boy. Perhaps he is catching mackerel, perhaps he's after flying-fish with a butterfly-net; perhaps he's looking in shop windows, or playing marbles. I could go on for years imagining what he might be doing, and then I shouldn't be right."

"Well, I'm getting a bit anxious," said Norse.

"That's your line, you know, Jemima," said the Master, "and you wouldn't be happy if you were not anxious, so stick to it. I am not anxious a bit, for Gamble Gold will be here about four o'clock to-morrow morning."

Norse threw her arms round Pappa Westray and hugged him.

"Steady!" cried the Master as he gently slid his head out of danger. "You nearly choked me."

"But I'm so full of joy," cried Norse.

"And I'm so out of breath," said Pappa Westray, panting, "that I really must request you not to do it again."

"How do you know he will be here?" said Norse.

"I telephoned to the lighthouse keeper on Cape Wrath and he reported 'Canoe with golden sail passed going eastward at 9 p.m. Crew—one small boy with golden hair and charming smile; one dog, asleep; with them a seal and a mermaid.'"

"A seal and a mermaid!" said Norse. "Now I wonder who they are, and where he picked them up."

"Not a bit of use wondering," said the Master. "If you or I wanted a seal and a mermaid, we should advertise or go to a registry office, and inquire into their characters, and then very likely the seal would be bad-tempered, and the mermaid flighty; but a small boy just picks them up in the sea as he goes along, and I dare say they are very kind to him."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Norse, looking very fierce, and thinking to herself that if the seal and the mermaid had not been kind to Gamble, it would be the worse for them.

"I'll be down at four sharp," said Pappa Westray. "It's time we turned in now. Good-night, Norse."

"Good-night, old man," said Norse, and she went to her cottage.

"Dear old lady," said Pappa Westray, as he undressed and turned into his hammock, which was slung in a corner of his study. "As Norse she was perfect, until she went away and started as Granny to one boy. I expect she will be all right again when he turns up, but it will be a bit of a struggle for her at first. However, we can't have any favourites here. All the boys have the same food, the same lessons, the same sort of clothes, the same pocket-money, and it is part of the arrangement with Norse that she has to love them all the same amount. I've no doubt she will do it when it comes to the pinch."

So saying he set his alarm at a quarter to four, pulled the blanket over his shoulders, and in a few minutes was snoring peacefully.

Norse went to her room and found Little Flotta was fast asleep. She threw open the window. It was a hot summer night, and as it always is in the far North in summer time, there was no darkness, but only a soft twilight which lasted for the few hours when the sun disappeared. Norse was not in the mood for sleep. She sat at the window, gazing out to the west across the calm water, straining her eyes to see if she could find the canoe with the orange sail. Her mind went back to the old days in far Glen Guile, and she wondered, as many a granny and mother has done, whether if she had never told her little boy stories of the wide world he would have been content to live on with her for ever and remain a little boy. But something told her that it was best as it was; and that it was right for Gamble Gold to want to go out into the wide world and be a King, and she ought to be thankful that he had remained a small boy

as long as he had, for most grannies and mothers find their small boys grown into big men before they have time to look round, and their clothes have to be given away long before they are worn out. Yes, Granny had much to be thankful for, she told herself, and she had always foreseen that he would want to grow up and go out on his own, and she had the dear old school to come back to, and all the delightful, mischievous, jolly, teasing, naughty, lovable boys to look after. So what more could she want? Then she began to wonder how Gamble would get on with the boys, and she worried over that for a bit. Then she began to fear that she might go to sleep, and not be down at the pier when he arrived, and she worried over that a bit. Then she began to nod in her chair, until her chin hit her big gold brooch, and she started up, and it had struck three, and the sun was already risen, and she crept out of the room on tip-toe, that she might not wake Little Flotta.

But Little Flotta was awake right enough, and only "foxing" for fear of being told she must not get up, and as soon as Norse had gone out of the room, she jumped out of bed, and dressed herself as quickly as she could. Whilst she was dressing, she saw a canoe coming round the cliffs, and she guessed this was bringing the small boy Norse had told her about last night.

She ran down to the pier, crying out, "Norse! Norse! I've seen the canoe."

"Where, dearie?" asked Norse.

"It's coming round the cliffs—you can see it from the window," said Little Flotta.

Norse ran down to the end of the pier, and waited

impatiently. Little Flotta followed her and held her hand, so as not to fall into the water.

"There's one thing I forgot," said Norse, "he will be sure to call me Granny, and that can never be allowed."

She took out her blotting-pad and pen and ink and wrote out a notice, and pinned it on to the flagstaff on the pier-head.

As she was doing this, Little Flotta called out: "Halloa, Norse, what's this coming round the cliff?"

"It's a mermaid," cried Norse, full of excitement. "Pappa's right, he's coming."

And slowly round the headland came Sally pulling the canoe after her, and in the canoe was Gamble, fast asleep, but Budge was awake, sitting in the stern with the paddle under his arm making believe to steer. After them came the old Seal pushing the canoe along with his head.

The Seal and Sally brought the canoe up to the steps. Budge leaped out barking and jumped up to kiss Norse, as he used to do in the old days, and nearly frightened Little Flotta by offering her his black nose for a kiss, and jumping round her and barking wildly. The noise awoke Gamble Gold, who rubbed his eyes and ran up the pier steps shouting out, "It's Granny! I declare it's dear old Granny."

Granny hugged him to her heart and could not speak for joy.

After a moment or two, during which Budge never stopped barking, she said to Gamble: "Gamble dear, what made you so late? I've been terribly anxious. However, you've come at last."

"But where have I come to, Granny?" asked Gamble, looking round at the marble pier and the big school-house on the cliff.

"Pappa Westray's school, darling, and you mustn't call me Granny any more now, for you are only one of the boys, and the others have grannies of their own, only they are not allowed to bring them, and it wouldn't be fair if I were Granny to you and only Norse to them."

"Well, I shall always call you Granny, because you are Granny, you know," said Gamble.

"Hush, you mustn't," said Norse. "There's the rule." And she pointed to the flagstaff.

Gamble Gold went up and read the notice; it said: "Any boy, seal, or mermaid landing on this quay must not use the word Granny."

"That seems to settle it, Gran—I mean Norse," said Gamble Gold.

"It does," said Norse, in rather a husky voice.

"But I shall love you as Gran—I mean, you know, what's the name—eh?" said Gamble, the corner of his mouth curling down.

"That will be very jolly," said Norse, sobbing.

"Rather!" said Gamble, sniffing vigorously.

And I really believe that Norse and Master Gamble—who was now out in the wide, wide world on his own—would have burst into tears had not Little Flotta run up to Norse and thrown her arms round her neck, and said, "Never mind, Norsey dear, I'll call you Granny, and you shall always be my Granny."

"Hush, darling," said Norse, kissing her. "There's the rule."

"But I'm not a Boy or a Seal or a Mermaid," said Little Flotta, laughing.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Pappa Westray, who came striding along the quay in a blue jersey and serge trousers and a round straw hat. "Little Flotta isn't a boy or a seal or a mermaid, of course. Ha, ha!"

"Please, sir," asked Gamble very politely, "what is Little Flotta?"

"A little girl, of course," said Pappa Westray.

"Thank you, sir," said Gamble, gazing at Little Flotta in delighted astonishment. "What pretty things little girls are—I never saw one before."

"You've a lot to learn then," said Pappa Westray, as he shook hands heartily with his new pupil and bade him welcome.



XI

Gamble's School-Days



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THE SWIMMING LESSON.

CHAPTER XI

GAMBLE'S SCHOOL-DAYS

NOW Pappa Westray's school was not as other schools are. It was a school for young Kings, and only boys who really wanted to be Kings went there. In the old days they chose their Kings in a strange manner. Any small boy who happened to be the son of a King was good enough for them, and when there was war they knocked one King on the head and started another, and then his son was good enough to be a King when his time came.

That kind of folly could not last for ever, of course, and as the world grew wiser and more Chinese, they found out that the best way to get a King who was a solid all-wool, cream-laid, superfine, copper-fastened article, was to choose one from Pappa Westray's school. So whenever there was

a vacancy in a kingdom they had an examination at the school, and the best boy became King.

In this way you always got a young up-to-date King. Stuffy old fellows had no chance, though they could enter for the Exam. if they liked. Sons of Kings had just as good a chance as any one else. They came in crowds to the school, not that they were really keen about being Kings, but their mothers wished it, and like good fellows they did what their mothers asked them to do. They got a sound education of course, and Pappa Westray found out their good points, and often got them situations in after-life as billiard-markers or jockeys, or postage stamp collectors or after-dinner speakers, or any job at which they could earn an honest living.

Pappa Westray had spent a long life in finding out what small boys ought to learn, but I cannot tell you all about his system here. When you grow older you can study it for yourself in his own books, such as "Boys and their Ways," "The Brat and the Beehive," "The Bad Boy Be calmed," and many other volumes which contain all that need be known as to how to train up boys in the way they should go. As he used to say to despairing mothers and angry fathers: "A boy is like a young apple, all green outside and core inside. If you wish to make him rosy you must shine on him and he will respond. If you treat him gloomily he will remain green and sour." Pappa Westray knew how to shine on boys and when to shine and when not to, and he ripened boys for the King Market as no other schoolmaster had ever done before.

The first day of the arrival of a new boy was spent in

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taking him round the school and explaining the place and its ways to him, and introducing him to his new friends so that he should feel at home.

As soon as breakfast was over, Pappa Westray suggested to Gamble Gold that they should walk round the school and see things.

"What is to be done with the Swiss Seal and Sally?" asked Gamble.

"Where did you fish them up?" asked Pappa Westray.

Gamble told him the adventure he had had in Old Man Halibut's fishing-ground, and the Master agreed at once that Sally and the Seal must be carefully looked after.

"We can't have them up at the house," he said, "but I have no doubt the Seal would like to look after the boys' bathing place for us, and we shall want a bathing cove for Little Flotta, so Sally can keep that tidy for us and teach her to swim."

"I suppose I can keep Budge?" asked Gamble.

"Certainly," said the Master. "It is one of the rules of the school that every boy must have a dog. A lot of the old schoolmasters were against dogs, but I brought in compulsory dogs and they have been a great success. You can tell at once what sort of a boy you have got hold of by the way his dog behaves. We will go down to the kennels and fetch Budge and take him with us."

The kennels were a little way from the school buildings. Each dog had a little brick house of his own and a run in front of it surrounded by iron railings. There were one hundred and ninety-four houses in six rows. I haven't worked out how many to the row, but any one may do it who is curious on the subject. On the

gate in the railings was a brass plate with the name of the dog and his owner. A copy of the rules made by Norse hung up inside each brick house. They read thus :

RULES FOR DOGS

1. No howling at night.
2. No barking before seven in the morning.
3. No dog to go a walk without his master.
4. No fighting.
5. No dog to chase cats, hens, sheep, or cattle.
6. Rats refusing to leave on request may be killed.

If any dog disobeyed the rules his master was punished. This made the boys careful to train up their dogs in the habit of obedience and taught each boy in a sportive way the value of this old-fashioned virtue.

Budge was delighted to see Gamble, and the Master was more than pleased to find how well Gamble had brought him up and how readily he went to heel when commanded to do so.

When they left the kennels they passed across the school field where the games were going on. It was summer, and the large cricket-field was full of boys playing at different games and practising at the nets. Cricket was a new idea to Gamble Gold, and Pappa Westray explained it to him.

"In the old days," he said, "the cricket lesson was much neglected. There was a time I believe when the old barbarians played cricket merely as a game. In those days Latin grammar and French verbs and Euclid and frivolous amusements of that kind were actually taught

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in schools. Now I have no objection to Latin grammar or Euclid—indeed we have a Triangle Club that plays at Euclid on Saturday afternoons ;—Euclid as an amusement, Euclid as a picture book, Euclid as a book of nonsense is an excellent change after a week of serious cricket or football, but the important things of this life must come first."

The Master blew his nose loudly and looked very important. He was talking to Gamble out of one of his books, and Gamble, who did not understand a word of what he was saying, murmured "Thank you very much, sir. The way you put it makes it quite—er—"

"Opaque," suggested the Master.

"The word I wanted, sir," said Gamble, smiling innocently.

"We shall make a King of you yet," said the Master, patting his head approvingly. "Hulloa!" he continued, looking at his watch, "the Geography Balloon is going up. We will go and see it off."

A large motor balloon with a car to hold twenty was struggling to get free at the other end of the field.

"I'll race you to the balloon," cried Pappa Westray, and off went the old man rolling along with his sou'-wester at the back of his head and his telescope under his arm at the rate of four and a half miles an hour.

Gamble could have beaten him easily, but he seemed to think that was not expected of him, and he trotted behind the Master about a yard and a half all the way.

"Pax-wax!" cried Pappa Westray as they reached the balloon—"I won." He always cried out "Pax-wax!" when he was excited or pleased, and now he was very pleased.

All the boys cheered and the Master panted vigorously. Gamble pretended to be quite out of breath.

"We'll make a King of you yet," said the Master, looking at him with pride.

A very old grey withered man with a complexion like the back of an oyster-shell was packing the lads into the balloon. A hundred goblins at least had hold of the ropes.

"That's old Fossil," said Pappa Westray. "He's been in geography all his life. Knew the shapes of the countries before there were any countries. He discovered the Equator, and took the leg of mutton off the North Pole when he was sixteen years old at the first Esquimaux regatta. Professor!"

Professor Fossil looked up dreamily.

"A new pupil," continued the Master. "Gamble Gold—joined us yesterday—intends to be a King."

The Professor looked down on Gamble Gold sadly. "It is no use being a King," he said with a sigh; "in a few million years the kingdoms will be under the sea and the sea will be dried up into kingdoms."

"That seems a pity," said Gamble cheerfully, "but there will always be geography, won't there?"

"True, oh King that is to be," said the Professor, with the ghost of a grin. "There will always be geography. Chop and change as you will, there will always be geography."

"Time you started," called out Pappa Westray; "which hemisphere do you do to-day?"

"The Western," replied old Fossil. "All Europe and part of Asia Minor, and Africa if we have time."



THE BALLOON.

"Then hurry," said the Master ; "you are five minutes late."

"When you have lived a few billions of years you won't worry about five minutes," grumbled old Fossil, as he climbed into the balloon.

"Let go!" called out the Master.

The struggling goblins gladly obeyed. Up soared the large balloon, round went the electric fans, and away she sped to the south-east for the geography lesson.

"I should like to learn geography," said Gamble Gold.

"You shall," said the Master. "Next to cricket it is a most useful study. In cricket you learn the geography of one field, mid off, square leg, and so on ; then you start swimming and learn the geography of one part of the sea—that's good as far as it goes ; then you go out in the balloon. When I was a little boy geography was learnt with books and an atlas. You learnt chief towns, rivers, mountains, capes and bays. In my balloon system you soar above over the chief towns and mountains and capes and see them for yourself. I discovered the idea when I was quite a small boy. I got a big atlas, opened it and put it on the floor below the dining-room table, then I lay with my chin on the edge of the table and imagined I was sailing in the air. It was a polished mahogany table and I had dirty boots on, and my dear mother—who preferred mahogany to geography—spanked me soundly for spoiling the table. This left an impression upon me that I long remembered, and when I started a school I had the balloon built and old Fossil takes out a class every day."

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"I should like to try it with a table and an atlas before I go in the balloon," said Gamble, gazing at the departing machine, which was now a speck in the sky.



THE BALLOON SYSTEM.

"I shouldn't advise you to do it whilst Norse is about," said the Master, and they started down to the bathing place.

The bay where the boys used to swim was a sandy

shore enclosed by rocks, and the dressing boxes stood on the grass at the edge of the sand. The Seal, who was already in charge, had rigged up a little square tent open on one side with a counter in front of him, on which were boxes of chocolates and butter-scotch, wide-necked bottles full of different sweeties, plates of buns, tins of biscuits and bottles of lemonade and ginger-pop.

"I shall do jolly well in this shop," he said, as he thanked Pappa Westray for giving him the place.

"I expect he will," said the Master thoughtfully. "One hundred and ninety-four boys spending one penny each every day for six days a week for fifty-two weeks less thirteen weeks holiday in the year. You can work that out in play-time if you like, Gamble, but of course no arithmetic is allowed in lesson times."

A large frog was teaching the boys the best style of swimming. He climbed on to a rock, dived in and swam across the bay. The boys followed his example.

"You should let me teach them the tail flip stroke," said the Seal, who looked down on the Frog because the salt water made him sneeze.

"Breast stroke to begin with," said the Master, "but some of the seniors might learn later on."

They climbed up the cliff, and in the next bay Sally the mermaid was bathing with Little Flotta and supporting her with her tail, whilst the little girl tried to swim. She was getting on splendidly. Norse, with her dress well pinned up, was shouting directions from the beach. Gamble Gold thought Little Flotta looked prettier than ever as she ran dripping up the shore in her pink bathing frock followed by Norse and a rough towel.

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Walking back through the fields to the school-house, they met Scappa and Scrabster ploughing with a team of oxen.

"Ploughing," said the Master, "is one of the most important branches of industry. A Professor once told me that the larger the field of study, the easier it was to



LITTLE FLOTTA'S SWIMMING LESSON.

get ploughed. But I put it in this way. A King must learn the beginning of things. Most people can sow and any one can reap, but you can't do either with success unless the ploughing is well done. That is a nasty, tough, uncomfortable job that a King had better do for himself, so I teach it."

"I should like to learn to plough," said Gamble.

"In this world you must plough or else be ploughed," said the Master, "and that's another reason why it is wise to learn to plough."

Scappa and Scrabster were unyoking the oxen and starting to drive them home.

"Whither away?" called out the Master.

"Who is going to wither away?" shouted the Twins in one voice. Then they giggled one giggle between them.

"I said 'whither away,' not 'wither away,'" said Pappa Westray sternly.

"We won't wither away," shouted the Twins, still giggling.

"Then dry up," shouted Pappa Westray after them, as they and the oxen disappeared through a gate at the other end of the field.

"Smart boys those, Gamble," continued the Master, shaking his head over them. "Education makes boys smart, but Scappa and Scrabster will be smarter yet before the day is over. Lads who try to be funny at the expense of their schoolmaster are only fit for one job."

"And what is that, sir?" asked Gamble.

"A police magistrate," said Pappa Westray mournfully. "But come along, we will go down to the History School."

The History School was a big building with a huge portico in front of it. On the walls were placards containing notices of forthcoming plays such as *Julius Cæsar* and *Richard III*.

"Nowadays, Gamble, history is only taught by means of plays," said Pappa Westray. "When you have seen

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Julius Cæsar killed in the Capitol, you know he was killed in the Capitol. If you read it in a book you might read in another book that he wasn't killed at all. That used to be the worrying thing about history when I was a boy. One history book said that Oliver Cromwell was a bad man, another said he was a good man. It didn't matter to Oliver, but it did to me a lot. Of course Kings must learn history, so I took all the plays I could find, and where there were none I had some written, and I made a rule that anything not in the plays is not history. That made history a lot easier, I can tell you."

They went into the theatre and saw a scene of *Julius Cæsar*. It was a wonderful sight to Gamble Gold, who had never been in a theatre before. He could have sat for hours listening to the beautiful words of Mark Antony mourning over his dead friend. But there was more to see, and they stepped out again into the daylight and went across to the riding school and the archery ground, and down to the harbour, where several smart little cutters lay at anchor ready for the yacht racing. Then they went into the carpenters' shop, and the boat-building yard, and the tailors' and shoemakers' shops—for Kings had to learn all trades—and back to the school-house where the big gymnasium was, and the large library full of Latin and Greek and arithmetic books, which Pappa Westray took care to explain might only be used in play-time.

The dinner bell rang, and the Master told Gamble that for the first afternoon he was free to wander about where he liked, and the next morning he must start regular school work. After dinner and a short rest in

the library he took Budge and walked down to the bathing place and had a dip. The Frog was not on duty, but the Seal gave him some instructions in the tail strike. Then he brought a pennyworth of mixed biscuits and walked along the cliff to a heather slope, from which he could see the yachting class managing their boats in the tideway. Whilst he was lying in the heather wondering how he should like his new school, Budge jumped up and barked aloud. It was Norse and Little Flotta taking an afternoon stroll. They sat down by Gamble's side and listened whilst he told them all he had seen that morning.

"And do you think you will like school?" asked Norse.

"I'm sure I shall," said Gamble, "but I shouldn't like to stay here for ever. I want to go on and be a King."

"He will be a splendid King, Granny," said Little Flotta, looking at him admiringly.

"Very likely," said Norse.

"I say, Norse, I've got a grand idea. Do you remember when I wanted you to be a Queen, you said you were too old. Why shouldn't Little Flotta be a Queen when I'm a King?"

Little Flotta clapped her hands.

"You must wait until you are a King," said Norse, "and then of course you can ask Little Flotta."

"And I shall say, 'Thank you very much, I shall be delighted!'" said Little Flotta.

"You will say nothing of the kind," said Norse sternly; "you will say, 'Honoured as I am by His Majesty's condescension, I must request His Majesty to confer upon this subject with my revered father, the King of Iceland.'"

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"Oh, Granny, I can't learn all that," said Little Flotta.

"Do, Flotta," asked Gamble eagerly, "for my sake."

"Well," said Little Flotta, shaking her head, and smiling at Gamble, "if you're very kind to me whilst I am here, and if I don't love any one else by the time you are a King, and if your kingdom is very nice, and if Granny will come and live with us, then—"

"Then?" repeated Gamble eagerly.

"I'll see about it," said Little Flotta.

"Quite enough for the present," said Granny as the school-house bell clanged out "Tea-Time."





XII

Prince Nougat



CHAPTER XII

PRINCE NOUGAT

GAMBLE GOLD sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. He could not hear the bleating of the sheep or the rush of the waterfall, and he was not in his little tent. Then he remembered—he was in No. 36, his own little room at Pappa Westray's school, and to-day he was to begin the work that should fit him to be a King.

All the boys wore blue serge suits and blue ties, and Gamble was glad to find when he opened his Gladstone bag that a suit of the right pattern was there ready for him. No. 36 was half a bedroom and half a study—and the study part was fitted up, as Pappa Westray's own study was, like a gymnasium. There were no books and no desk in the room, for reading and writing were not encouraged in school hours, though they were freely allowed in the library in play-time to all who had done their work well. As soon as Gamble had had a few turns on the parallel bars he ran downstairs into the school courtyard in front of the school buildings. Here there was a call-over of names and numbers, and Norse went round on a tour of inspection. Several small boys who had, with unkingly carelessness, forgotten to brush their hair or omitted some other necessary ceremony were sent

back for repairs. Norse saw to the repairs herself, and when she brushed a small boy's hair she generally rapped him on the head several times with the back of the hair-brush to keep him still, so that it was as well to remember to brush your own hair.

As soon as the inspection was over, Gamble Gold was glad to find that the next thing to be done was to go down to the kennels to give your dog his breakfast and a run. It was now after seven and all the dogs were allowed to bark, and a fine noise they made jumping up against their railings to meet their masters. Whilst Gamble was combing Budge down, a tall delicate boy with small dark eyes, black hair, and a somewhat yellow complexion sauntered lazily along and stopped to watch Gamble at work. He was a romantic, graceful lad and looked as though he might have been one of the beautiful young Princes you read of in "The Arabian Nights."

"I'm Prince Nougat," said the boy to Gamble in a patronising way. "What sort of dog is that?"

"He's a real Welsh sheep-dog. He's called Budge. Aren't you, Budge?" said Gamble, hugging him.

"Fierce, eh?" inquired the Prince.

"Swallow anything here; wouldn't you, Budge?" said Gamble.

Budge lifted his top lip and snarled at the Prince as if to suggest he would like a mouthful of Nougat to begin with. The Prince stepped back.

"I hate dogs," said the Prince.

"I love Budge," said Gamble, and Budge wagged his tail.

"Mine's a Chow-Chow," said the Prince, looking over the next railings. "He's called Chickweed."

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Chickweed came out as the Prince opened the gate and received a cabbage from his master's hands with a great show of gratitude. Whilst he was munching this, Budge sniffed round him and growled at him with contempt, and had serious thoughts of rolling him over on the gravel, when Gamble called him away to his own meal of dog-biscuit.

"I hate this dog business," said the Prince, bundling Chickweed back into his kennel and slamming the gate on him. "Fancy my having to feed a Chow-Chow."

"Why not have an Airedale?" suggested Gamble.

"I hate dogs," said the Prince.

Budge seemed to follow the conversation, for he showed all his teeth and looked at the Prince as if he would like to put him on the top of the dog-biscuit.

Gamble now said he would take Budge for a run on the cliffs, and asked the Prince if he intended to take Chickweed.

"Chickweed doesn't run," replied the Prince, "he sleeps. I got him for that reason. If you must have a dog, you should have one that doesn't run."

Gamble said nothing, but whistled to Budge.

"However," continued Prince Nougat, "I'll come with you. There's nothing to be done before breakfast."

The two strolled away towards the cliffs. There were any number of dogs taking a morning run, and Budge, in five minutes had made fifty friends, and was rushing round the downs with a troop of fellow-dogs at his heels, all tumbling over each other and barking and shouting with joy.

"Horrid row!" grumbled the Prince. "If I were Pappa

Westray I'd make sausages of the lot. By the bye, what's your father?"

"I haven't got a father," said Gamble rather sadly.

"What was he?" asked the Prince.

"I believe he was an engine-driver," said Gamble.

"It just shows what a rotten school this is. Fancy my being at school with the son of an engine-driver." The Prince sighed deeply.

"Don't worry about it," said Gamble in a kindly tone. "He was a very, very clever engine-driver, and I dare say your father couldn't drive an engine at all. Who is your father?"

"He's—'What-you-may-call-it,'" said the Prince lazily.

"Oh!" said Gamble, as if he clearly understood.

"You know—'What's-his-name,'" continued the Prince, making a great effort to remember.

"He would be," said Gamble.

"He is," said the Prince. "Of course,—I remember,—he is the Shah of Perthshire."

"You mean Sheriff," suggested Gamble.

"I mean Shah," said Prince Nougat.

"Then it's not Perthshire," said Gamble. "I've been there."

"It's something like it. It's over there," said the Prince, pointing to the east. "I saw it from the balloon yesterday."

"Persia, perhaps," said Gamble.

"Very likely. I don't mind which it is. I'm going to be Shah when I grow up."

"If you pass the examination," said Gamble.

"If they don't let me pass the examination, there will

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be a terrible row about it," replied the Prince, looking very fierce.

"Who will make the row?" asked Gamble innocently.

Prince Nougat looked puzzled, and at that moment the school bell rang for breakfast, so there was a rush of boys and dogs to the kennels and then every one ran in to the house.

At breakfast Gamble sat next Scappa and Scrabster and they talked dog. The Twins each had an Esquimaux dog and they had grand stories to tell of sleigh runs on the ice in the Christmas holidays. They listened with great interest to Gamble's account of Budge and the clever way in which he looked after the sheep.

"That will be very useful to you in the second term," said Scappa.

"When the shepherd classes are on," continued Scrabster.

"Pappa Westray has a notion," they continued together, "that if you cannot manage a flock of sheep it is no good trying to govern a kingdom."

"Silence!" shouted the Master through his trumpet from the end of the table. "Pray silence for the Bard."

An old harpist with a long white beard came in and took his place on a platform at the end of the hall and began tuning his harp.

"We always have a song at breakfast," whispered the Twins, "it's part of the system. It's all in the Master's book, 'Music and Meals.' Father tried it at home with a gramophone, but the cream went sour."

"What are you going to sing, Bard?" asked Pappa Westray.

The old man stroked his beard. "Shall it be deep, majestic, smooth, and strong?" he asked. "Would you hear brisk notes in cadence beating or shall I ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears?"

"That means a sniveller," whispered the Twins to Gamble.

"What is the forecast?" asked Pappa Westray.

The Weather Monitor stood up and called out in a loud voice: "South and south - west winds. Moderate to fresh, fine and warm. Barometer rising."

"Then we can stand something a little gloomy, something in a minor key," said the Master.

"Good!" said the Bard cheerfully.

He was a Minor Bard and sang better in a minor key.



THE PARTING.

Prince Nougat 191

"What shall we have, Norse?" called out Pappa Westray.

"The Bonny Birch Tree," suggested the Bard, with a pleasant smile.

"Let him sing 'The Parting,'" said Norse. "There is a moral lesson in that ballad, and the sooner some of us learn it the better."

The boys whose hair had been re-brushed looked rather uncomfortable as Pappa Westray shouted out: "Pray silence for a song. The Minor Bard will sing 'The Parting'."

Sweeping his hands gracefully across the strings, the Bard brought out a few mournful notes of a tearful tune and began :

THE PARTING

I

When little Harold lived at home
Rough was his head O.
He would not play with brush or comb,
Rough, aye, and red O.
His mother bade him part his hair,
He laughed and said "he did not care,
He'd wait until to-morrow."
His father smiled but did not mind;
"In time," he said, "the lad will find
A parting is not sorrow."

II

When Harold grew to man's estate,
Bertha so fair O,
Laughed loud and long at Harold's pate—
Rough was his hair O.

In vain he tried with Bruin's grease
To part it like a cricket crease—
It vanished by the morrow.
For he who will not when he's young,
Too late learns why the poet sung,
"Parting is such sweet sorrow."

III

Now Harold's love is long a dream,
Where is his thatch O ?
Gone far beyond the help of cream,
Bear's grease, or Tatcho.
The parting that he spurned in youth,
He sees each morning bald as truth,
A wig he's had to borrow ;
But still upon the pier he'll find
When wild waves whistle in the wind,
Parting may still be sorrow.

Boys are tough creatures, and few tears were shed over Harold's fate. Kind-hearted Little Flotta felt that Bertha had not treated him well, and wondered in her own little mind whether she could possibly love Gamble Gold if he grew up a bald-headed man. She remembered her kitten falling into a lime heap and all its hair coming off, and she loved the kitten more than ever. But that was not quite the same thing, for its fur grew again. Whilst she was staring at Gamble and wondering all these things in her little mind, Pappa Westray began calling out the orders of the day. It turned out that the Twins were in the same class as Gamble and Prince Nougat, and that Gamble and the Twins and the Prince were appointed the crew of one of the cutters called *The Lively Jane*.

Sailing lessons were first in the time-table, and the boys having changed into sailor suits went down to the harbour

to find *The Lively Jane*. She was a charming little cutter, painted white and gold, with a new suit of sails. Old Joe, the boatswain—for the boys never went out without an instructor—sat in the stern and directed their movements, shouting out, “Now then, young guv’nor, tighten the sheet,” or “Belay!” or “Luff!” or “Stand by,” or whatever he thought fit to be done. Old Joe thoroughly approved of Gamble Gold, who soon learned how to trim the sails and was very keen and willing. Scappa and Scrabster had lived as much on sea as they had on land, and were thoroughly well-trained sailors. Prince Nougat troubled Old Joe very much, for not only was he ignorant of every rope and spar on board, but he would not try to learn, and though Old Joe did all that patience, kindness, and a rope’s end could do, the Prince made very little progress, and Old Joe feared that when the yacht racing examination took place Prince Nougat would injure the chances of *The Lively Jane*.

All the yachts stood out towards the west, and Pappa Westray sailed across to Hoy and sat with the Boy Giant on the top of his hill gazing at the yachts through his telescope.

“They are pushing *The Lively Jane* well into the wind,” said the Boy Giant.

“They are sailing her very well,” said the Master, shutting his telescope.

“Who are the crew?” asked the Giant.

“Old Joe, the Twins, the new boy, and Prince Nougat,” replied Pappa Westray.

“I can’t stand the Prince,” said the Boy Giant. “I asked him over last term one half-holiday to tea, and he

sneered at the bread and butter, saying it was too thick, and actually asked me what was the good of giving a party if I couldn't run to iced sherbet. Of course I could have run to it if I'd thought of it."

"Never mind," said Pappa Westray. "He has no manners, and therefore I'm afraid we shall never make a man of him, much less a King. I'm sorry, too, for his father, the old Shah, was a very praiseworthy lad, not clever, but he could stodge, and if you can stodge and go on stodging, anything is possible."

"What's the new boy like?" asked the Giant.

"Capital!" said Pappa Westray—"capital! Clever as you make them, looks after his dog as though he was his brother, knows his place—I beat him by two yards in a hundred yesterday—and he's as eager to learn as a starling."

"Then you'll make a King of him?" asked the Giant.

"Never prophesy unless you know. He'll make a King of himself if it's done at all. At present the only thing is, Will he stodge? That's the question, S-T-O-D-G-E," said Pappa Westray, spelling the word severely. "Stodge. Will he stodge?"

The Boy Giant, who never had stodged, nodded gravely as much as to say he knew what the question was and recognised that the answer was generally doubtful.

The yachts were all standing out on the same tack and had been for some time.

"I'll catch some of them napping," said the Master, laughing. "You see."

He took up his speaking trumpet and shouted out his orders: "Ahoy! Ahoy! About ship! Every one."

Old Joe's whistle was the first to sound. Scappa and

Scrabster sprang to their places, Gamble seized the right sheet as if by instinct, and even the Prince made no very special blunder. Round waltzed *The Lively Jane* as if she had been in a ball-room, and she was on the fresh tack several seconds ahead of any other cutter.

"Pax-wax!" cried the Master in his delight, "but Old Joe has got a smart crew this time, anyhow."

Pappa Westray was so pleased with the performance of *The Lively Jane* that he allowed her crew to take Norse and Little Flotta for a sail that afternoon.

That was a great honour. The boys put on white duck trousers, and Old Joe got out a brand new jersey for the occasion. Even the Prince tried to be smart in his movements when Little Flotta came on board, and Gamble was full of energy and nimbleness.

Little Flotta was used to the sea, and her brothers were excellent sailors, but somehow she had never thought their feats of seamanship were of any account compared to the untrained efforts of Master Gamble. Norse also took a deep interest in all he did. It was clear Old Joe was going to make a sailor of him, and that is, of course, a long way towards being a King.



LITTLE FLOTTA.

When they got round the cliff they stood out to sea, and as there was no work to be done and Norse was making tea, they all told adventures. Gamble told them about the Chieftain and the Salmon. Scrappa and Scrabster, both talking at once, recounted a wild adventure they had had in search of the North Pole. Old Joe sang them delightful chanties which broke out every other line into beautiful choruses. The Prince closed his eyes and slept dreamily.

"Now then, Nougat," called out the Twins, pinching him on either side, "your turn for a yarn."

The Prince woke up and shrieked, and told them the story of an adventure he had had on his way to school.

"I never travel by sea, you know," he said lazily, "it's so bumpy when it's rough. I use a magic carpet, and I sit in the middle and float away wherever I want to go to. Last term I stopped on the way in the middle of a forest to gather some wild raspberries, and a great big grisly giant came along and nipped me up in his arms and stole me and the carpet. He put me in a dungeon and nailed the carpet down in the spare bed-room. It was a horrible dungeon," continued the Prince; and he described the bats and beetles and rats in it until Little Flotta and the boys gazed at him in wonderment. "After a while the giant's daughter, who fell very much in love with me, came to see me every day."

Little Flotta felt very angry with the giant's daughter, but Gamble was glad to hear about her.

"One day," continued the Prince, "when her father was away she stole his keys and let me out to play with her, and at night she allowed me to sleep in the spare room,



THE GIANT STEALS THE PRINCE.

only I had to promise to go back into the dungeon again next day before her father returned, for he was a hot-tempered and headstrong giant. By the morning, however, I had got the carpet up and sailed away. I wasn't going back into the dungeon again, not likely."

"But you promised," said Gamble, very much shocked.

"In Persia we have a proverb," said the Prince, "that promises are like piecrust, made to break."

"And what became of the giant's daughter?" asked the Twins.

"How should I know?" replied the Prince. "I was jolly glad to get away, and she was an ugly little girl."

"Are any little girls ugly?" asked Gamble, looking at Little Flotta.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Old Joe. "What part do you hail from, young guv'nor?"

It was tea-time, and the Twins, who knew Nougat pretty well, asked Norse if he really had a flying carpet.

"Certainly," said Norse. "I lock it up in the box-room as soon as he comes and he doesn't have it out until all the other boys have gone home. I don't approve of such things for boys. Broomsticks for grown-ups are another matter."

"Come, Norse," said the Twins, as they sat round the little cabin table. "You must tell us something now. Let us have a new fable, one we have never heard before."

"Do you know 'The Lion and the Mouse'?" asked Norse, and as no one had heard it, she began:

THE LI-ON AND THE MOUSE

A man set a net to catch li-ons. A Li-on, com-ing home late from a crick-et sup-per, fell in-to the net. A Mouse who was pass-ing by said to the Li-on,



"I will get you out if you will not tell who did it." The Li-on prom-ised. Then the Mouse bit through the man's net. When this was done, the Li-on stepped out, and, put-ting his paw on the Mouse, ate him up, say-ing, "Your se-cret is safe in my keep-ing."

Moral.—Leave well a-lone.

"It is a pity that the giant's daughter did not leave well alone," said Gamble.

"But then the Prince would have had to live for ever in a dungeon," said Little Flotta tenderly, "and we should never have seen his wonderful carpet."

Prince Nougat smiled a pleasant dreamy smile at Little Flotta that made her blush, and Gamble felt a strong desire to knock him down.

"It's time to wash up," said Norse sharply.



XIII

The Exam.



CHAPTER XIII

THE EXAM.

I T would not be possible to give you a full account of all that Gamble Gold did at school, but he was a hard-working lad, and was soon able to sail a boat, and play the harp, and ride, and plough, and paint beautiful pictures, and play cricket, and sing in tune, and he learned all that could be learned about history and geography, and, in a word, he could do everything that a King should do. Moreover he did it in a kingly way, without saying, as some boys do when they hit a ball out of the field into the wood, "Oh, it's nothing," or what is worse, go swaggering round saying, "I hit the biggest hit this term." No, Gamble Gold did everything in a right-down regular royal way, as the poet sings, and the way in which you do a thing is at least as important as the doing of it.

He had so many things to learn and so much to do that he had not time to see Little Flotta very often. She and Norse would sometimes come down to the cricket-field in lesson-time to watch him play, but he was always in the field either batting or fielding, and had no time to come and sit under the trees and talk to her. Prince Nougat, who generally got bowled out first ball, and was always being punished for catching grasshoppers in the out field,

instead of the cricket-ball, often found his way to Little Flotta to sit with her during the innings. She could not help liking the Prince, he was so dreamy and romantic and told such amusing stories, and had had such strange adventures ; for he knew all "The Arabian Nights" by heart, and told Little Flotta all the stories in them as if they had happened to himself, at which, like Desdemona in the play, she loved him for the dangers he had passed, and he loved her that she did pity him.

Gamble Gold, however, treated the Prince with royal disdain, and when Little Flotta spoke about him, he would only turn up his nose with a regal sniff, and say, "Tush, child!" This rather annoyed Little Flotta, because she was nearly seven, and Gamble was only eight, and she did not like him to call her a child. When you are very young you like to be thought grown-up, but the more you grow up the younger you want to be. If Gamble had remembered this I daresay Little Flotta would have confided to him that the Prince had promised to take her a ride on his magic carpet. Little Flotta had asked Norse to let them have it out for a half-holiday, but Norse would not have anything to do with such a plan, and would not listen to their entreaties.

"In the box-room is the carpet, and there it remains until the end of the term," said Norse sternly.

It was clear she meant it.

"Why not borrow her bunch of keys?" said the Prince to Little Flotta.

Little Flotta looked shocked. "That would be very naughty," she said.

"Only borrow them, you know," said the Prince.

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Little Flotta shook her head.
"I don't see any other way of getting hold of the carpet," said the Prince.
Little Flotta sighed. She did want to have a ride on



THE SWISS SEAL UMPIRES.

that carpet, and the more it was forbidden the more she wanted it. Little girls have been made that way for all time. It is their one failing.

As for that naughty Prince, he kept telling Little Flotta of the delights of riding through the air on a carpet, and

had almost persuaded her to hide behind the curtains in Norse's room at the end of the term until every one had gone away, and then to come for a ride with him. But Little Flotta said it wouldn't do, as Scappa and Scrabster would never go home to Iceland without her. Then Prince Nougat sighed, for he did not like Scappa and Scrabster, who used to sit on his head and thump him hard when he would not do his fair share of the work on board *The Lively Jane*.

One warm summer day when the grass was golden in the sun and purple under the oak-trees, Norse and Little Flotta sat on the benches in the shade watching a cricket match. The Prince was lying at their feet with his back to the cricket. Scappa and Scrabster were out fielding. Pappa Westray had some work to do in his study, and had asked the Swiss Seal to umpire that afternoon. The Swiss Seal had always been a bit of a boaster, and when asked if he had ever played cricket, had told the Master that he had been Captain of the Matterhorn Rovers and used to keep wicket for the Gentlemen of Geneva.

"You will do then," said Pappa Westray; "you come up and umpire this afternoon."

So the Swiss Seal came up and was umpire and looked very important in a long white coat and a sun hat, but he really knew nothing about the game.

Gamble Gold went in first to bat, and the bowler was, if I remember rightly, a grandson of the Emperor of Australia. He sent down four balls at a terrific pace, but Gamble played them with care. The fifth, however, hit his leg, and the bowler, turning to the Seal, shouted, "How's that?"

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"Sivoo play," said the Seal, who had not been looking at the moment.

"Was it leg before wicket?" asked the grandson of the Emperor of Australia.

"It hit his drumstick, certainly," said the Seal.

"Is he in or out—how's that?" shouted every one excitedly.

"Out!" cried the Seal, not quite knowing what it meant, but seeing that he had to say one or the other.

Gamble Gold knew he was not out, but you cannot dispute with the umpire, so he walked sadly away. As he passed old Fossil, who was the other umpire, the old gentleman dived his hand into the pocket of his long white coat and produced a large green duck's egg, which he presented to poor Gamble Gold amidst the cheers of the other side.

Gamble took it with a polite bow, and made a short speech of thanks to old Fossil.

"Hard lines," said Norse, as he brought his duck's egg for her to look at to where she was sitting under the oak-trees. "The Seal is no more fit to umpire than a Bath bun. Never mind, it's the first duck's egg you've got. I should have it mounted in silver and keep it."

"They won't keep," said the Prince, "I've tried. I lend mine to an old hen now, and she hatches them out for me, and then I have duckling and green peas."

"The worst of it is," said Gamble Gold gloomily, "that no one will want a King who collects ducks' eggs."

"You never can tell," said Norse cheerfully. "All sorts of different Kings are wanted."

"True for you, Norse," said Pappa Westray, who had bristled his wron, and had come down to the field to look at the cricket. "There are ducks' eggs and duck's eggs. If you step out and slug at a straigh: one and miss it, then, that's a bad duck's egg, and you ought to be made to eat it."

Prince Nougat groaned.

"No noise whilst I'm speaking Prince," said the Master sternly, "or you will have an hour's exercise with the cricket roller. If you get an undeserved duck's egg or even an accidental duck's egg, then the question is, how do you take it?"

"Gamble made a nice bow and a speech," said Norse.

"That was right," said Pappa Westray: "not a long speech of course, but a few words of thanks gracefully expressed, and in a serious tone, mind, for obtaining a duck's egg is always a grave moment in a boy's career."

"It wouldn't do to treat the duck's egg as a yolk?" asked Prince Nougat innocently.

"Not at all," replied Pappa Westray, "but talking of yolk, you go and yoke yourself to the cricket roller, my young friend, and do an hour's exercise at the bottom end of the field, to remind you not to jest with serious subjects."

The Prince got up and walked sadly away, and Little Flotta felt rather sorry for him.

"I think I got the best of that yoke," said the Master, chuckling, and then he shouted after the Prince, "Half an hour will do, Prince." And he strolled on to the field to take the place of the Swiss Seal, who was making a terrible

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mess of the umpire's job, and had just allowed the bowler to have sixteen balls to an over.

The second innings of the match had commenced when a blue carrier pigeon flew from across the bay straight up to Pappa Westray and gave him a newspaper.

"Is there anything important?" asked the Master.

The carrier pigeon nodded hurriedly and was away again half across the island, for he had to go round the world before nightfall, and had a lot of other newspapers to deliver.

"One moment," said Pappa Westray, stopping the cricket match and opening the newspaper. "Something must have happened; let us see if it is anything interesting."

The newspaper was *The Daily Terror*, and now and then it caused wild excitement throughout the world by printing something that had really happened. Then the carrier pigeon brought it round to Pappa Westray, for, being a sensible pigeon, he was not going to carry other people's fibs round the world. If he wanted fibs he could tell them himself. There was real news to-day, though, and Pappa Westray shouted to Norse as he opened the paper: "Norse, Norse, there's a vacancy."

"Where?" cried Norse, rushing across the field.

"Sound the trumpet, beat the drum," called out Pappa Westray, waving the copy of *The Daily Terror* above his head, and dancing round the field.

The boys came rushing from all parts of the school, and Pappa Westray pulled out his spectacles, and climbing on to the top of the large cricket roller, he announced to the boys the extraordinary news:

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Gambie Gold

REVOLUTION IN WALES

Palace Sacked

JOHN JONES XXXV. DEPOSED

MEETING OF THE BARDS

The Archdruid Advertises for a New King

There was a long account of it all, and Pappa Westray read it out to the excited boys.

It appears that John Jones the thirty-fifth had never been popular in Wales. He began by passing a law that every Welshman should sleep with his window open, and although this was a wise law, yet his subjects believed that the reason he passed it was because he was a draper, and wanted to sell a cheap line of window curtains. There may have been some truth in this, for at his new palace Plas Golofydd, which was also the largest draper's shop in Wales, and was sixteen stories high and built entirely of steel girders and plate glass windows, he had nothing but cheap Manchester curtains in the windows the day the new law came into force. As this was the first of March and the east winds were blowing, the indignant populace bought the curtains eagerly but angrily, and walked up and down the streets singing the "March of the Men of Harlech," and calling for three groans for John Jones. This little worry, however, blew over for

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a time, and then John Jones passed another law which banished every draper from Wales except himself. As, at that time, there was one draper to every twelve men, women and children, this was too much for his subjects. They rose in revolution, cleared out Plas Golofydd, and John Jones fled to Liverpool across the sands of Dee.

Then the Bards in their beautiful flowing robes met in solemn conclave, and the Archdruid having collected five shillings from the populace, sent the following advertisement to *The Daily Terror*:

"WANTED, for Wales, YOUNG KING. Must be handsome, amiable, and fit to govern in Welsh or English. Thorough knowledge of harp essential. Pocket money half-a-crown a week. Palace and washing found. Can bring his own Queen or one will be provided. Examination at Pappa Westray's school to-morrow at 10.30. Examiners, Krab the Cave Man, the Poet Ossian, and the MacHaggis. N.B. No drapers."

"There's a chance for us," said Pappa Westray, folding up the paper, "to show what our education can do. No doubt a lot of outsiders will turn up, but I shall be very disappointed if one of my boys is not King of Wales. There will be no more lessons to-day, for I have a lot to do to get ready. To-morrow at ten-thirty I wish all of you good luck and may the best boy win."

As Pappa Westray jumped off the roller, the boys gave three cheers, and then broke away in groups to discuss the news.

"You will be King," said Little Flotta to Gamble Gold, as they walked away from the cricket-ground together.

"I should like to for one thing," said Gamble.

"What's that?" said Little Flotta earnestly.

"I couldn't tell you," said Gamble.

"Do!" said Little Flotta, putting her hand in his.

"You mightn't like it," said Gamble anxiously.

"I should if you would," replied Little Flotta.

"I want you to be my Queen."

Gamble wondered how he was bold enough to say such a thing.

Flotta nodded. "I should like to be a Queen. Would Norse go with us?"

"I hope so," said Gamble.

"And then we could ask Scappa and Scrabster to spend their holidays with us?"

"Yes," said Gamble delightedly, "of course we could."

"And get Prince Nougat to come on his carpet and take us for a ride?" continued Little Flotta, full of the joys of a queenly life.

Gamble was silent.

"I don't think I could allow that," he said.

"You don't allow Queens to do things, they do them," said Little Flotta in a downright tone.

"When I am a King," said Gamble seriously, "I shall settle exactly what's to be done."

"About everything?" asked Little Flotta.

"About everything," replied Gamble.

"About me too?" asked Little Flotta, astonished at the idea.

"Yes," said Gamble, who had often thought the thing out carefully, and was sure it was the best plan.

"Very well then," said Little Flotta, dropping his hand,

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"I don't want to be a Queen, and I won't be a Queen. I shall go back to Iceland."

She stamped her little foot and turned and ran into Norse's cottage.

Gamble Gold stood in the playground feeling rather lonely and beginning to think that there were things in this world that were even more worth having than the crown of Wales. However, his mind was soon full of the next day, and of what it might bring forth, and for the moment even Little Flotta was forgotten.

The day of the examination came. Krab the Cave Man, Ossian, and the MacHaggis arrived on board a Welsh ironclad—which was really one of the quarry steamers lent for the day—and with them the Archdruid and a number of bards, who had come to take home the new King to his kingdom.

Krab wore his cap and gown, the red hood of a Doctor of Navigation, and the Gold Medal he gained as Fellow of the Royal College of Carpenters. Ossian had only two degrees, and as they were both below zero, he was rather ashamed of them, so he wore a knickerbocker suit of Harris tweed with a bit of white heather in his button-hole. The MacHaggis was in a glorious tartan kilt. The Archdruid wore his usual white robe and a wreath of oak leaves on his brow with a piece of mistletoe in the centre. He shook hands with Pappa Westray as he landed on the pier, and solemnly kissed Norse and Little Flotta under his piece of mistletoe. Then stretching his hands out, he shouted in a loud voice, "Let the examination proceed!" and it did proceed.

There were at least a hundred and fifty candidates, other

than the boys, some of them quite old men, and they had come from all parts of the world to try their luck. You will wonder how the examiners got through their work, but they were men of resource, and as Krab said, "We only get ninepence for the job, and our sandwiches, so the sooner we polish it off the better for us."

The first thing was to rule out of order any candidate that had not brought a dog. That got rid of a lot of the new-comers. Then Krab asked every one in Welsh, "If a herring and a half cost three halfpence, what is the price of a penny bun?" This was a test in Languages, Riddles and Arithmetic, and many failed, and were thrown out of the contest. Dobbin the buck-jumper threw a lot more. He was the riding test. Ossian brought him from Glasgow. His father was an Arab steed and his mother was a tram-car horse : any one who could ride Dobbin was fit to be a King as far as riding went. He trotted round the field very peaceably with his rider, until Krab whistled, then he began to jump and throw himself around and twist himself about as if he were trying to fold himself into the right shape to fit into a square envelope. If any candidate stuck on for two minutes Krab whistled, and again Dobbin trotted peaceably back to the examiners. Gamble and the Prince and Scappa and Scrabster all passed the riding Exam., but the Prince was thrown out on the dog inspection, for Chickweed refused to come near him when he called, and only slunk into a corner of his home when the Prince went into his little yard. Gamble on the other hand got full marks for this test, and Budge was awarded the Biscuit of Obedience for his excellent behaviour. Gamble Gold was more pleased

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with this than if he had been made a King on the spot, and was ever so full of joy when Little Flotta stooped down and kissed Budge's black snout, and told him she loved him best of all dogs in the world.

"Love me, love my dog," Gamble whispered to himself, as he ran off to change for the last contest, which was the swimming race.

There were now only three left in the examination—Scappa, Scrabster, and Gamble Gold. The contest took place in the swimming bay. It was a hundred yards across the bay to a coal-boat that was anchored near the rocks. Krab and Ossian sat on the bulwarks of the coal-boat with their legs dangling, and the MacHaggis started the boys from the side of a boat exactly a hundred yards away. The cliffs were crowded with boys and other candidates, and the Swiss Seal, in a clean white apron and cap, was doing a roaring trade. Little Flotta and Norse stood near the Archdruid on a big rock which had a fine view of the winning-post.

"Look here, Gamble, old man," said Scappa and Scrabster, "we don't care about being King of Wales, we don't—we'd rather fish for lobsters in Iceland, and there are no icebergs in Wales. Even their penny ones come from Italy. Suppose we give in."

"Nonsense!" said Gamble, "we swim it out."

"Just as you like, but we shall certainly beat you," said the Twins, and many thought so, for they were grand swimmers.

You could have heard a feather drop on mossy turf when the three lads stood up on the side of the boat waiting for the word.

"Ane! Twa! Three! An' awa'!" shouted the Mac-Haggis.

Their fingers touched the green water at the same moment. Each made a clean hole in the sea, and at the end of the dive there was not an inch between them. Scappa swam breast stroke, Scrabster side stroke, and Gamble Gold the tail flip stroke that the Seal had taught him.

"Scappa wins!" shouted some.

"Scrabster wins!" shouted others.

"Gamble wins!" shouted some.

"A dead heat!" shouted others.

Everyone yelled something as the three boys darted through the water. They were within a few yards of the coal-boat, and it looked as if they were all three going to be first, and the race would have to be swum over again.

Little Sally was sitting at the bottom of the sea on a high rock, looking at the race upside down. As the swimmers passed her, Scappa happened to touch her with his foot, and little Sally pinched his toes. This made Scappa scream, and shout "Oh," and get a mouthful of water. Scrabster did the same of course, out of sympathy for his brother twin, and at that moment Gamble, with an extra strong tail flip stroke, shot past them and touched the coal-boat.

A wild shout rent the air. Every one went mad with joy. Gamble had won! Gamble was King! Pappa Westray shouting out "Pax-wax!" six times, jumped into the sea with all his clothes on. Norse threw her arms round the Archdruid and hugged him. The MacHaggis



LITTLE SALLY PINCHED HIS TOES.

danced a reel with Krab, and Ossian and Little Flotta rolled over and over on the sands shouting "Gamble is King!" Every one was happy, every one rejoiced in Gamble's success, and the first to pat him on the back and wish him good luck were Scappa and Scrabster. There was only one of the boys who did not come up to him and wish him joy, and that was Prince Nougat.

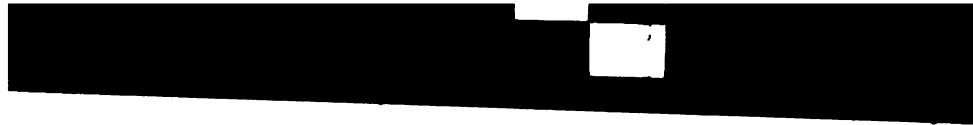
And in truth the Prince had never seen the end of the race, though he heard the shouts of "Gamble is King" as he ran up the cliffs and across the footpath to the school-house. He had made up his mind to do a very naughty thing that day, and had taken a pair of nail scissors with him down to the shore. He stood close to Norse during the race, and in the midst of the excitement, when every one was shouting, he had quietly cut the silk braid by which her bunch of keys was slung to her belt, and then taking off the key of the box-room, he had dropped the rest of the bunch into a pool of shrimps.

Now he was speeding away across the playground to get his magic carpet out of Norse's box-room.



XIV

The Magic Carpet



CHAPTER XIV

THE MAGIC CARPET

P RINCE NOUGAT chuckled softly to himself when he heard the shouts and cheers on the beach below.

"I shall be out of this place to-morrow," he said to himself, "and perhaps Someone will come with me." He thought of Someone with a capital letter, but it was F. not S. There was not a goblin stirring about near the cricket-field as he ran across it, looking carefully round to see whether he was watched, nor was there any one in the school buildings. All was silence. Everybody had gone down to the shore to see the swimming race, and now the race was over and Pappa Westray, Krab, Ossian, and the Archdruid were making speeches. All the boys were surging round the tent of the Swiss Seal trying to get pennyworths of chocolate and butter-scotch to eat during the speechifying.

Prince Nougat climbed up the spiral staircase into the great clock-tower—which was also a watch-tower—where the box-room was. There was a notice on the door "Knock and Ring." He paid no attention to this, but put the key in the lock and pushed open the door. There he stood amidst one hundred and ninety-four trunks, portmanteaus, and kit-bags, each neatly labelled with the boys' names. In large letters painted on the white-washed

wall were notices: "Moths, be off!" "Beware of the camphor." In a corner of the room neatly rolled and tied up with string was the magic carpet, with Prince Nougat's name on a label. To seize it was the work of a moment, to slam the door behind him was the work of a second moment, and the third moment was devoted to getting rid of the box-room key. This the Prince dropped into the works of the big clock, where he thought they would not find it, or if they did find it could not get at it without wasting a lot of time. He stole downstairs and out to the kennels and hid the roll of carpet in Chickweed's kennel. Budge from next door looked on suspiciously with his head on one side and his tongue out. He felt in his own dog mind that the Prince meant mischief and he would have liked to worry and destroy the carpet, but as he could find no reason for his anger he thought it must be the hot weather and, having cooled his nose in the water of his trough, he turned into his kennel and went to sleep on the straw.

When the Prince had put the carpet in a place of safety he did two other very strange things. He went right into Norse's cottage, and taking her broomstick broke it in two and put the pieces on the kitchen fire. The cook-goblin was away, and as the fire was hungry and low-spirited it thrust out tongues of flame at the broomstick and lapped it up merrily. Then he went down to where the geography balloon was anchored, and climbing into the rigging he stuck a pin in the balloon. In three-quarters of an hour he well knew the balloon would be lying on the grass flatter than a poached egg. "Now," said the Prince to himself, "all is ready. The question is, Will she come?" And he

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went down the cliff merrily singing to himself the chorus of the well-known song from the Ballads of Bagdad, "And the only question is, 'Will she come?'"

WILL SHE COME?

I have built a little cottage for my lady,
And I'm planting her an avenue of trees,
They are sycamores, for sycamores are shady,
And I'm hiring her some butterflies and bees.
It is situated half way up a mountain,
I have bargained with the bees that they shall hum,
That the butterflies shall flutter round the fountain—
All is ready for my lady love to come.

And the only question is, "Will she come?"
I have offered her a share of every crumb.
Will she leave her dear mamma,
And her brothers and papa?
"Will she come?" that's the question—"Will she come?"

I have built a little stable for her pony,
I have bought a wicker kennel for her pug,
And ordered in some cheese and macaroni,
That our supper may be sumptuous and snug;
Now I sit upon the chimney-pot and wonder
Was I rash about the promise of the crumbs?
Have my lady love and I made a blunder?
Well, I really cannot tell you—till she comes.

And the only question is, "Will she come?"
I have offered her a share of every crumb.
Will she leave her dear mamma,
And her brothers and papa?
"Will she come?" that's the question—"Will she come?"

When he got back to the swimming bay every one was shaking hands with Gamble Gold—who was now dressed again—and Gamble was asking all his friends to come and spend their next holidays with him in Wild Wales. Prince

Nougat came forward with the others and they shook hands.

"I was wondering," said Gamble, "if you would mind letting me have Chickweed. He lost you the Exam. and I think you would do much better with an Airedale or something of that kind."

"Take him with pleasure," said the Prince. "I thought of having him made into riding gloves myself."

"That would be a pity just yet," said Gamble. "I think if we can get him off that habit of eating cabbages and put him on to a meat diet, something may be made of him yet."

"Only riding gloves," said the Prince. "By the bye, I don't want you to go into his kennel. I'll fetch him out for you myself later on."

"Thank you very much," replied Gamble, who could not help wondering why the Prince wanted to fetch him himself.

"What time do you start?" asked the Prince.

"Directly after tea," said Gamble. "The tide serves, and the Archdruid wants to get home to look after his sheep."

"What are you going to do about a Queen? Take your own, or take what's provided?" asked the Prince.

"I thought of taking my own," said Gamble.

"It's safer," said the Prince. "Who is it to be?"

"There's Norse and Little Flotta," said Gamble. "I asked Gran—Norse, I mean—a long, long time ago, and she did not seem eager. Do you think it's any use asking Little Flotta?"

"Any use!" said the Prince, laughing. "Of course it is. She will jump at it."

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"I don't want her to jump at it," said Gamble. "I want her to jump at me."

"You want too much," replied the Prince. "You're a King now, and if you want Little Flotta for a Queen you just say so and the thing is done."

Gamble Gold was not satisfied about it, but as they walked along to the school-house for tea he found time to ask Little Flotta, and true enough, as the Prince had said, she was ready to be Queen if Norse would come too, and she went off to Norse's cottage to ask her. On the way there she met the Prince, who was leaning over the railings of Chickweed's kennel with his face in his hands pretending to sob.

"What's the matter, Prince?" asked Little Flotta.

The Prince pretended to dry his eyes. "You are going to be a Queen, aren't you?" he asked.

"Queen of Wales," said Little Flotta, "and Gamble is King."

"It's jolly easy to be a Queen," said the Prince. "No Exams., no lessons—"

"You have to get chosen by the King, though," said Little Flotta, "and that doesn't happen to every little girl."

"I should have chosen you if I had won," said the Prince.

"But I don't know if I should have come with you."

"Not if I had got the magic carpet for you?" he asked.

Flotta sighed.

"Look here, Flotta," said the Prince. "Can you keep a secret?"

Now little girls cannot keep secrets any more than they can throw cricket balls, but they love to think they can.

Little Flotta nodded.

"If you promise not to tell, I'll show you the magic carpet."

Little Flotta promised. "Where is it?" she asked.

"In Chickweed's kennel," said the Prince.

"No!" said Little Flotta in amazement.

"Yes!" replied the Prince proudly.

Budge came out at this moment. He was more sure than ever now that something was wrong. He put his fore-paws on the partition railing and watched events. It was a pity the railing was so high.

The Prince went into the kennel and brought out the carpet. Chickweed came and looked on as he spread it out. Budge growled.

"Come and sit on it," said the Prince, as he sat down himself in the middle of it with his legs crossed.

It was very little bigger than a hearth-rug, and looked ordinary enough, but Little Flotta was afraid of it.

She shook her head and said, "Can you make it move?"

"Abracadabra!" said the Prince.

The carpet moved a foot in the air and the Prince raised his hand and it hung there without moving.

Little Flotta clapped her hands.

The Prince waved his left hand in the air and the carpet sank gently to earth.

Whilst this was going on a great trouble had arisen in the school-house. The Norse had lost her keys. Such a thing had never happened before, and the whole school,

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headed by Pappa Westray, had rushed down to the beach to hunt all over the cliffs and the rock pools and in any place where Norse might have dropped them. It was Sally who found them, whilst she was gathering shrimps to make shrimp jam with.

"Has any one lost some keys?" she asked, putting her head out of the water and holding up the bunch.

Norse cried out with delight and Pappa Westray waded in to take them from Sally. Norse counted them one by one.

"There is one missing," she cried.

"Count again," asked Pappa Westray.

Norse did so. "Yes," she said, "there is one missing."

"Which one?" asked the Master.

"The box-room key," answered Norse with a groan, for she foresaw what was happening. "Where is Prince Nougat?"

Her question was answered by a shout from Scappa and Scrabster, who came bounding along down the cliff keeping step with each other all the way and shouting out, "The Prince has run away with Little Flotta."

They pointed out to sea, and when Norse and the Master looked up, there was the magic carpet floating southward before the light northerly breeze across the hills of Hoy.

"Stop them!" shouted Pappa Westray through his trumpet.

The Boy Giant stood on tip-toe on the highest mountain there was, but they floated by just out of his reach. When Norse saw this she flew to her cottage for her broomstick, but all she could find of it was a bit of

burnt handle and a smell of wood smoke. Pappa Westray smiled to himself the smile of a schoolmaster who knows a thing or two, as he walked leisurely to the school-house and got a packet of sandwiches and a new birch rod. Then he roused up Old Fossil and they walked down to where the geography balloon was anchored, intending to give chase in that. When he found it was emptied of gas and lying on the ground in a heap, he threw the sandwiches at Old Fossil's head and repeated the word "Pax-wax!" until he nearly lost his voice.

As for poor little Gamble Gold, when he heard that the wicked Prince had carried away Little Flotta he felt inclined to dive off the top of the cliff and try to fly after them, but Budge held him firmly back by the seat of his trousers. When Pappa Westray came back and told all the school there was no possibility of following the runaways, Gamble felt there was nothing to be done except to put his arm round Budge's neck and bury his face in his fur and cry. This he did so heartily that tears stood in Budge's eyes for shame that he could not help his dear master, and he wished, poor dog, that he had been born an eagle instead of a useless four-legged animal with no flying tackle.

Krab and Ossian and the MacHaggis had heard all the trouble, and Krab, who had left his wings at home and walked over with his seven-leagued boots, sat in the shade of an oak-tree thinking.

The other two joined him, and they held a solemn council of war as to what was to be done to rescue Little Flotta.

"I suppose you haven't got an idea, Bard?" asked Krab.



THE MAGIC CARPET.

Ossian shook his head.

"Then I must use one of my own," said Krab moodily, "and the older I grow the fewer I seem to have."

"Dinna be wasting them if they're of ony value," said the MacHaggis. "Try ane of my ideas."

"What's the price of them?" asked Krab.

"They're priceless, but I'll gie ye ane of 'em the day for saxpence, as I luve the laddie weel and he seems to be sair put oot ower losing the little lassie."

Ossian paid up threepence and Krab paid another threepence, and the idea was duly handed over. It took a long time for the MacHaggis to explain it, but it came to this: that everything could be caught by bait, and that if you wanted to catch Little Flotta you must get some of the right bait and put it in the right place.

"What is the right bait?" asked Ossian.

The MacHaggis said that was another idea and meant another sixpence, but they needn't trouble to subscribe, for he didn't know.

Ossian was angry and wanted the sixpence back, but Krab, who was far cleverer, said to the MacHaggis: "Mon, you are a gran' canny Scot, and your idea is worth ninepence."

The MacHaggis sobbed to think he had sold his idea so cheap, and Krab ran down to the shore and had a talk with the Swiss Seal.

"That's the idea," he said, as he explained things to him, "and the only question is, can you do it in the time, do you think?"

"Didn't I swim the Channel in 1906 in eight hours thirty-two seconds?" said the Swiss Seal scornfully.

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"Sorry, old man," said Krab, "I had forgotten."

"It was in all the papers," said the Seal. "I had a piano organ and beef tea and a magic lantern, and the captain of the tug read me bits out of *Hiawatha* to cheer me up."

"You can't have that to-night," said Krab.

"Never mind. I can do it," said the Seal cheerfully, and he slid off the rock into the sea and swam towards the south. And little Sally followed him, singing songs to him to entertain him on his journey.

And the way he went and what he did was shortly this. He swam round Mull and away to the south until he sighted the Island of Anglesea—where every triangle has four angles and there are more wrong angles than right angles—and this dangerous coast he skirted with his fins, and little Sally pulled up her petticoats as they passed lest they should catch in the jagged angles of the rocks. And the Seal swam straight to the coast of Carnarvonshire as Krab told him to, and here he left little Sally sitting on the rocks whilst he made his way up the Gorfai River through the woods of Plas-y-bryn and out into the Cwellyn Lake, where he arrived at midnight, and rested in its quiet waters until daybreak. Then he went to the little station and took the first train up the hill to Snowdon Ranger, travelling half price as an actor, which he found was cheaper than going as a Seal. From there he rode up Snowdon on a mountain pony with a side saddle, and arriving on top about midday he set up the square tent he had brought with him and spread on the counter plenty of butter-scotch and caramels and chocolate, as Krab had told him to do, for Krab knew that this was the best form of

bait to catch a little girl with. Then he leaned up against a slab of granite and went to sleep, for he was very tired.

Now when Krab went back to the school-house to get his seven-leagued boots he found everything in great confusion. Gamble Gold said he did not want to be a King at all now Little Flotta was gone. The Archdruid said that if you were once a King you had to remain a King until you were beheaded or kicked out, and all the Bards agreed with him.

He called on the Bards to carry off Gamble Gold to the ironclad—or rather the quarry steamer—but the Bards were afraid of Budge, for Budge put out his tongue at them and winked hungrily at them as if they were dog-biscuits.

Norse said that she thought Gamble ought to go now he was King, and Pappa Westray said his school would be ruined if he didn't.

They all reminded Gamble that the advertisement said a Queen would be found for him if he did not bring his own, but this did not seem to comfort him. When Krab appeared on the scene, he ran up to him saying : "God-father! Godfather! What shall I do?" And Krab, putting his arm round his shoulder, walked off with him to the deserted playground, followed by Budge.

They had a long talk over the matter.

" You remember what you told me at Ossian's Cave? " asked Krab.

" Yes," said Gamble.

" You wanted to grow up and go out into the wide, wide world and be a King."



SEAL GOING UP SNOWDON.

"Yes," said Gamble doubtfully.

"You had made up your mind, you know," said Krab.

"I had then," said Gamble.

"You can't go on making up your mind and then unpicking it again. No mind will stand that. It gets frayed at the edges and full of creases and quite useless. Make up your mind and stick to it like beeswax."

"Then you think I ought to go?" said Gamble sorrowfully.

"What do you think?" asked Krab.

"I suppose I ought," sighed Gamble. "But I shan't enjoy being a King a bit without Little Flotta."

"The question is, Who said you would enjoy it?" asked Krab.

"Will Granny come?" asked Gamble.

"Certainly. She is to be your Prime Minister. That was agreed with the Archdruid."

"Then I'll go," said Gamble, resigned to his fate; "and really, you know, I'm just as likely to find Little Flotta at Carnarvon as I am here."

"Certainly," said Krab.

It was a sad procession that went down to the pier. Gamble and Granny and Budge led the way, the Archdruid and the Bards following, Pappa Westray and the boys bringing up the rear. They took their places on board. Granny went below to the ladies' cabin, but Gamble stood on deck waving to his school friends as long as he could see land. Then he sat on deck with his arm round Budge's neck and cried himself to sleep, wondering why he had been such a foolish little boy as to come out into the wide, wide world and learn to be a King.

XV

Gamble, King of Wales



CHAPTER XV

GAMBLE, KING OF WALES

NOW what had happened to Little Flotta was this,—and I want you to understand that she had not run off with that naughty Prince Nougat of her own accord. But true it is, as the proverb says, that you should look before you leap, and Little Flotta could not wait to look but leaped into the middle of the carpet and sat down and said : "Now, Prince, just one little ride round the playground."

The Prince leaped to her side and sat down and whispered "Abracadabra" to the carpet, and away they went.

In vain did poor Budge bark and howl and jump about in his kennel yard when he saw them sailing away across the playground. No one heard him, for Gamble was in No. 36 packing the Gladstone bag, and every one else was putting on his best clothes to be present on the pier at the departure of King Gamble.

Little Flotta found carpet sailing was splendid,—and I tell you that it is great fun—and there is no dust or smell or noise about it as there is with motor-cars, only I hope no little girl who reads this book will ever think of going carpet sailing without first asking mother. If Little Flotta had asked Norse first, all would have been well, and

when she found herself drifting across the sea with the north wind she began to think so herself.

"Let us get back now, Prince; it is nearly tea-time," said Flotta.

"You cannot go back, you know," said the Prince lazily. "You can go up and down and along in front of a wind, but you cannot steer a magic carpet, for it has not got a rudder."

Then Little Flotta began to be frightened. "How do you come to school on it?" she asked.

"I wait for an east wind and start."

"And how do you go home again?" she said.

"I wait for a west wind," said the Prince dreamily. "There is never any hurry about getting anywhere if people only knew it, and it's glorious drifting along in the air."

It certainly was a pleasant sensation, and if Little Flotta had not known that she was a naughty little girl to come at all, she would have enjoyed it very much, for she knew there were stars all night and a lovely moon, and it was just the sort of warm summer night that makes one long to be sailing through the air. As it was she was not enjoying herself and wanted to get back to Norse. But when you do what is wrong it is not so easy to go back. The wind and the waves and the world are too often against you, and it is very hard work indeed to go back, and sometimes you find you cannot do it at all for ever so long, and thus it was with Little Flotta.

You may read all about their wonderful journey in the "Memoirs of the Great Bear," and Little Flotta herself refers to it in one of the chapters of that elegant book which she

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published in after years called "Scribbles on a Royal Slate."

Miles and miles and miles they floated, and the moon sank into the sea and the sun rose again and still they floated on, Little Flotta wondering whether she would be carried away to Persia, or whether there would come some chance of escape. They were both getting hungry now and the Prince had discovered with grave concern that they had not as much as a stick of chocolate between them.

"The fact is," said the Prince, "I was so excited about getting the carpet that I forgot all about the grub."

Little Flotta looked hungry, but said nothing.

"I don't often forget the grub," said the Prince; and fair play to him, this was true.

They were now just over Snowdon, and the Prince, who was looking over the edge of the carpet, cried out: "Holloa! here is a sweetie stall on the top of a mountain. Let us go down and take in a stock for the rest of the voyage."

Little Flotta nodded. She dared not appear too eager, but she had made up her mind that once she reached the earth nothing should induce her to put her foot on the carpet again. She had had enough of the magic carpet to last her a lifetime.

The Prince waved his left hand slowly, and the obedient carpet sank gently to the earth on the top of Snowdon, just in front of the stall.

"That was well timed," said the Prince.

Flotta leaped off the carpet and ran towards the stall.

The Swiss Seal, hearing a noise, woke up, and putting his head over the counter, said: "Now, my merry mackerels,

"What can I do you?" My won't!" he cried when he saw who it was "It's the Prince."

"A pound of chocolate creams, sirrah," said the Prince haughtily.

"Swiss play" replied the Seal coming limply out of the stall and wobbling along towards the magic carpet. "Say 'Swiss play,' and you may help yourself. That is the rule of this shop."

"And a capital rule too, old man," said the Prince pleasantly as he muttered "Swiss play," and opened a bottle of pear drops and began filling his pockets. "Come along, Fisetta; what a pity it is little girls have only one pocket."

But Little Fisetta did not heed him at all, for she was watching the Swiss Seal, who had reached the magic carpet and was lying on it on the ground and wrapping it round himself with his fins.

The Prince looked round and called out angrily: "Come off my carpet; you'll make it all fishy."

"It's a fishy sort of carpet as it is," said the Swiss Seal.

"How dare you roll it round yourself like that?" shouted the Prince.

"I've dared a lot bigger things than that," said the Seal proudly. "If I hadn't my orders to obey, I'd do some of my circus tricks for you, that would show you what I can dare when I'm playing at daring."

"If you don't come off my carpet," said the Prince, striding towards him, "I'll pull your whiskers."

"If you want to travel on this carpet," said the Seal, opening his mouth wide, "you must travel inside. If you want to be an inside passenger, get inside sharp."

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"Inside what?" asked the Prince impatiently.

"Inside me!" replied the Seal fiercely.

This so frightened the Prince that he shouted "Abra-



cadabra!" and away went the carpet, taking the Swiss Seal with it.

"Phew! He's gone," said the Prince, much relieved, and chuckling to himself, "and he doesn't know how to get down again."

This did not matter to the Seal, for he slid off the carpet into the sea at Barmouth and swam round to Carnarvon again, so he was all right. The carpet, no doubt, went home to Persia.

"Have some caramels?" said the Prince.

"You are a horrid nasty boy," said Little Flotta, stamping her foot. She had been longing to tell him this all the way, but did not dare to stamp her foot on the magic carpet, and it was no good doing it without stamping her foot.

"Please yourself," said the Prince. "I don't know where we are or what's going to become of us, but we have got rid of that silly old Seal, so now the best thing we can do is to carry on the sweetie stall ourselves. You shall be the lady who sells the things and I'll come and do the shopping. Then to-morrow you shall come and do the shopping."

At any other time Little Flotta would have been delighted to do this, for she was very fond of playing shop, but now she was sitting down on the cold rock sobbing her little heart out to think what a naughty little girl she had been to go and get lost, and wondering if she would ever be found again and who would find her.

She had not long to wait and wonder, for before the Prince had had time to swallow half a pound of caramels and four ounces of acid drops, a shout was heard in the distance and a little figure was seen across the mountain range against the rosy sky coming nearer and nearer. It was Krab leaping to the rescue in his seven-leagued boots.

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He alighted on the top of Snowdon with one bound from the Great Orme's Head, and catching the Prince by the collar shook him almost angrily—at least, angrily for Krab—and said: “Pappa Westray's waiting for you, my boy.”

Seizing him by the wrist and taking Little Flotta in his arms he called out: “Just in time! Just in time! the Coronation is beginning.” And he leaped along with his burden, by gentle steps of half a mile or so at a time, down to the beautiful city of Carnarvon.

Yes, the Coronation was indeed beginning and the town was thronged with people. All the Joneses and the Robertses, and the Evanses and the Davieses, and the Griffithses and the Thomases, and the Prices and the Pritchards and the Parrys had put leeks in their button-holes and slung their harps on their shoulders and left their ash-groves to come into the city to welcome their King. And the beautiful Jenny Jones herself and all her fine companions in tall sugar-loaf hats and red petticoats had come to see the choosing of the Queen. And all the shepherds had come down from the hills with their dogs, for they had heard that King Gamble was himself a good shepherd, understanding the ways of lambs and sheep. And this had made the great heart of Wales thump loudly with joy, for the noble sheep is the beast dearest to the heart of the Welsh nation as being the most patient, woolly, long-suffering animal on earth, and also the best to eat.

Budge was trotting up and down the High Street making friends with the many sheep-dogs in the city, and when any shepherds met him with his gold collar

on, they shook their heads and smiled to each other. "That is the King's dog, is it? Well, if the King be half such a good fellow as his dog, we are a lucky nation." Then they called to him "Tyred yma." ("Come here") and patted him and looked at his teeth and the beautiful black roof of his mouth, and said to each other: "A King who owns a dog like that is worthy to be the King of Wales."

But whilst the shepherds were gossiping in the streets, the ladies of Wales were attiring their little girls in all the brightest and best they had, to go to the Coronation, for it was known that the King had not brought his own Queen and that a Queen would be provided, and that after the Coronation would come the ceremony of choosing the Queen.

The Coronation was a long affair, there were so many speeches to make and ceremonies to perform, but Gamble, although he grew very weary of it, did not want it to come to an end, for he knew there was to be the choosing of a Queen, and the more he thought of that the more he wished he had never come out into the wide, wide world at all. Granny he knew, and Little Flotta he knew, but he might choose a Queen quite different from either of them, and what would happen to him then? The Archdruid poured some oil on his head and made a long speech to him about the duty of work. Gamble sighed and thought of far Glen Guile.

Now Krab had taken the Prince and Little Flotta to the house of a friendly Druid who had known Drusilla, Gamble's mother, when she was a little girl. He lent Krab a parcel-post basket into which Prince Nougat was

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bundled, and Krab directed a label to Pappa Westray's school, and sent the hamper off by the next luggage train. Pappa Westray had a lot to say to him when he got back to school, and the forcible way in which he put it drew tears to the Prince's eyes.

As for Little Flotta, Mrs. Druid took her off and dressed her up in a lovely white and gold dress embroidered with pearls and a star of diamonds for her hair. She did not deserve all these pretty things a bit, for though not as naughty as the Prince, she had really not behaved at all well, and ought to have been punished as well as the Prince. But little girls are always getting little boys into trouble, and walking out of the trouble and leaving the little boys inside of it, and the more you go out into the wide, wide world the more you will find it so.

Little Flotta felt sorry for the Prince, though she was more angry with him than she was with herself, and it pained her kind heart to think that the Prince would not see her in her beautiful new dress. She was not long in changing her clothes—new clothes go on so quickly—and then she found Krab waiting for her with a golden chariot drawn by four white Welsh ponies with long tails and flowing manes. As they drove through the crowded streets, all the people shouted out, "Let this one be the Queen," and Little Flotta in her quiet way enjoyed it very much.

They reached the Castle at the right moment, but not a minute too soon, for the choosing was already beginning, and it was done then as it is done to-day, and always will be done when a King of Wales has not a Queen of his own, and has, as it were, to trust to luck.

All the little girls who enter for the Queen competition are dressed in white and stand round the courtyard of the Castle with their faces to the wall, and their pigtails are tied up with pink ribbons. The King stands in the middle of the courtyard and is blindfolded. It would not be fair for him to see the little girls' faces, for he has to trust to luck and all the little girls are to have the same chance. Then the Archdruid turns him round three times and says, "Choose your Queen." And the first little girl whose pigtail the King touches is the Queen.

The Coronation was ended and the heralds blew their trumpets announcing Gamble Gold the Lord Baron of Cardiff, Marquis of Harlech, Viscount of Llandudno, and Duke of Flint to be King Gamble, the First Emperor of Wales, and ruler of as much of the rest of the world as he could conquer.

Gamble in his crown and purple mantle adorned with the Order of the Golden Leek, and wearing the Star of the Red Dragon on his breast, waved his silver sceptre over the bended heads of his people, and in a short but woolly speech thanked them for their kindness.

And now came the choosing of the Queen. The crowd gathered on the walls, the harpists tuned their harps, even the mountain sheep and goats climbed on to the hills above the city to get a glimpse of the ceremony.

The Archdruid solemnly blindfolded the King, so that it was impossible for him to see. Taking the Druid by the sleeve he walked into the centre of the courtyard and waited by himself in the middle of the vast throng, feeling as lonely as a limpet. Then the Archdruid called out the little girls by numbers, so that Gamble should not

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even know whether he was going to choose a Sarah Ann or a Gwendoline, and each little girl was carefully placed with her face to the wall with her pigtail hanging down her back.

And all being in order, the Archdruid now approached and said to Gamble: "O King, turn round three times and catch who you may."

And as Gamble was turning round three times, feeling very sick and very sad, Krab and Little Flotta arrived at the Great Gate of Carnarvon Castle. Little Flotta could not understand why there was such a crowd and why the little girls stood with their faces to the wall, and why Gamble was staggering about blindfolded in the middle of the courtyard.

But Krab, lifting her out of the chariot, told her to run up to Gamble and tell him there was no need now to choose a Queen.

And Little Flotta like a good little girl did exactly what she was told. She picked up her train, threw it over her arm, and running across the lawn like a lapwing called out to Gamble: "You need not choose a Queen, dear, for I am choosing you for my very own."

"There is no need for any choosing," cried out Granny in a loud voice—a Prime Minister is expected to talk sense in a loud voice on important occasions—"The King's own Queen is here—Little Flotta!"

At these words, Gamble Gold tore the bandage from his eyes and rushed forward, catching Little Flotta in his arms and carrying her to the golden chair in which he had been crowned.

Cheers rent the air and were doubled and redoubled

when the King announced that all the little girls who were disappointed should be Pigtails-in-Waiting to the Queen herself.

Nothing now remained but for the Archdruid to draw the Sword of Peace a few inches out of its great sheath whilst the King and Queen put their hands upon it, and all the Bards gathered round and touched it reverently.

"Is it peace?" called out the old Archdruid in a loud voice three times.

And three times came back the glad shout of the great Welsh nation, happy in their new King and Queen: "Heddwch! It is peace!"

And it was peace.

* * * * *

Those who have read history and studied the Second Book of Krab know how Gamble became King of all the world, and what great works and adventures came to him in the long and wonderful days of his reign. And those who do not care for history will, I am sure, like to know that Gamble Gold and Little Flotta and Budge and Granny lived happily ever afterwards.



